Bengaluru Monday, March 9, 2026 Pages 14 Vol 79 No 68 ₹7

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DH

DECCAN HERALD

The Power of Good

Modi targets TMC again for 'insulting' Murmu

Mamata looks to turn tables on BJP with old picture

Page 8

Israeli strikes target Iran's oil infra

Council finalises new top leader; Indian killed in Saudi

TEHRAN/DUBAI/JERUSALEM, AGENCIES

Iran was preparing to reveal its new supreme leader on Sunday, after US-Israeli air strikes destroyed fuel dumps and triggered fires that choked much of Tehran in a thick blanket of smoke.

The clerical body tasked with choosing a successor to Ayatollah Ali Khamenei has reached a decision, but not yet named the new leader.

"The vote to appoint the leader has taken place and the leader has been chosen," said Ahmad Alamolhoda, a member of the Assembly of Experts. Other assembly members confirmed a decision was made, with one suggesting the son of the late leader would take the post.

Tel Aviv has issued a stark warning that its forces won't hesitate to target the new chief.

In a related development, an Indian national is among two persons killed after a military projectile fell on a residential location in Saudi Arabia's al-Kharj Governorate on Sunday.

Earlier in the day, Israel's military confirmed it had struck "fuel storage facilities in Tehran". The strikes are the first time Iranian oil infrastructure has been targeted during the nine-day war. Four oil depots and a petroleum logistics site in and around Tehran were hit.

In response, Iran's military warned it would target oil sites in the region.

▸ **Iran, Page 5**

Trump rejects settling war with Iran, Page 12

Sunday's developments

- **Saudi Arabia:** 2 killed; attack bid on diplomatic quarter of Riyadh
- **Iran:** Blasts across country; **4 oil depots hit;** toll crosses 1,200
- **Israel:** **2 soldiers killed** during ops in Lebanon, 6 wounded by shrapnel, 10 explosions over Tel Aviv
- **UAE:** Explosions in Abu Dhabi, multiple **missiles intercepted**
- **Lebanon:** Strike on a Beirut hotel **kills 4**; death toll in country so far 394
- **Kuwait:** **2 border guards killed,** fuel tanks at airport targeted by drones
- **Bahrain:** **3 wounded** by falling missile debris, desalination plant damaged

India's $11.8bn food exports to be affected

Prolonged disruption in West Asia will badly hit Indian farmers and food processors in Karnataka, Telangana, Andhra Pradesh, Punjab and Maharashtra as India's agricultural exports are heavily dependent on Gulf markets.

Details on Page 10

Quickly

Govt to retain provisions of Vemula Bill

The government is likely to retain the bulk of the Rohit Vemula Bill drafted by the Campaign for Rohith Act to prevent caste-based discrimination in education institutions, including limiting the scope of the Act for SC/ST students.

Details on Page 4

Parl Budget Session resumes today

The Budget Session of Parliament will resume on Monday with the Opposition-sponsored resolution seeking removal of Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla expected to be taken up on the first day itself.

Details on Page 8

Final quota list for 369 GBA wards out

In a major step towards holding the much-delayed Bengaluru civic polls, the state's urban development department on Saturday notified the reservation list for all 369 wards that fall under the Greater Bengaluru Area (GBA).

Details on Page 3

India's road to final

GROUP STAGE				SUPER EIGHTS				
Beat USA by 29 runs	Beat Namibia by 93 runs	Beat Pakistan by 61 runs	Beat Netherlands by 17 runs	Lost to South Africa by 76 runs	Beat Zimbabwe by 72 runs	Beat West Indies by 5 wkts	Semifinal Beat England by 7 runs	

SKY high: India T20 champs again

ON TOP: Trounce Kiwis by 96 runs to win record third title

SIDNEY KIRAN
AHMEDABAD, DHNS

The Narendra Modi Stadium was the site of one of Indian cricket's greatest heartbreaks when the Men in Blue lost the 2023 ODI World Cup final on a balmy November night.

On a warm evening in March 2026, the same ground witnessed history. India lifted the T20 World Cup for a record third time — the most by any team — sending more than a lakh fans inside the vast stadium and over a billion watching across the country into delirium.

Their 96-run win over New Zealand in a lopsided final here on Sunday, helped them become the first team to successfully defend the title in the biennial event.

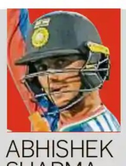
Living up to the pre-tournament billing as the overwhelming favourites, India came all guns blazing with the top three of Samson (89), Abhishek Sharma (52) and Ishan Kishan (54) smashing blazing fifties to power the hosts to a massive 255/5.

From there on, the result was a foregone conclusion as New Zealand needed an outwardly effort if they were to stop India's name from being embossed on the trophy again. Unlike in the semifinals against England where Indian bowlers went for runs in a high-speed chase, they looked as solid as their batters. They kept picking wickets at regular intervals to stall New Zealand at 159 all out in 19 overs.

Indian cricket team lifts the T20 World Cup after defeating New Zealand in the final at the Narendra Modi Stadium in Ahmedabad on Sunday. AFP

Heartbreak for Lakshya Sen at All England P.13

Cometh the hour, cometh the men



ABHISHEK SHARMA
The southpaw reserved his best for the last - his **21-ball 52** laying the platform for a big total

SANJU SAMSON
The wicket-keeper-batter delivered again, giving India a roll-licking start with a **46-ball 89**

AXAR PATEL
Twin strikes in the powerplay prevented New Zealand from exploiting field restrictions

JASPRIT BUMRAH
The fast bowler did what he always does best. His haul of **4/15** broke New Zealand's spirit

Class 9 student attacks classmates in Ballari; 1 dead

BALLARI, DHNS: A Class 9 student was killed and seven others sustained injuries after their classmate attacked them with an iron rod and a knife, at a private residential school in Ballari on Saturday night.

Ballari SP Suman B P stated that the suspect is on the run, and a team has been formed to apprehend him.

The deceased student hailed from Andhra Pradesh.

The condition of one of the injured is stated to be critical. The hostel warden, who attempted to prevent the attack, was also injured.

According to the police, the students went to bed after dinner on Saturday night. Around 10.15 pm, the accused, a Class 9 student, went on a rampage, randomly attacking students with an iron rod, a knife, and a sharp iron object.

SP Suman said that based on the complaint lodged by the father of the deceased, an FIR has been registered against the accused (juvenile in conflict with law) and the school management.

A postmortem was conducted at the Ballari Medical College and Research Institute. The father of the deceased student alleged that the suspect could be a drug addict.

Nitish Kumar's son joins JD(U)

PATNA: Nishant Kumar, son of Chief Minister Nitish Kumar, on Sunday formally joined the Janata Dal (United). The move is touted as a first step towards his elevation as the deputy CM of Bihar. Nishant had largely stayed away from politics, barring a few occasions when he praised his father for putting Bihar on the fast track to development.

Details on Page 8

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SIKSHA 'O' ANUSANDHAN (DEEMED TO BE UNIVERSITY)

SIKSHA 'O' ANUSANDHAN
SAAT-2026

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National Institutional Ranking Framework 2025
15th in University Category
22nd in Engineering Category
15th in Medical Category
09th in Dental Category
10th in Law Category

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North & Central corps conduct cleanliness drives

BENGALURU, DHNS: Extensive cleanliness drives and awareness programmes took place across Bengaluru on Sunday, as part of the ongoing Swachh Survekshan 2025–26 campaign.

Civic authorities organised footpath walks, waste clearance operations, and community engagement events.

The Bengaluru North City Corporation conducted a week-long cleanliness drive across all its divisions.

A six-km footpath walk was held around Yelahanka Lake, with around 250 participants joining the initiative. With Sunday's walk, the total distance covered under the footpath walk programme in the North Corporation limits reached 122.68 km.

Meanwhile, the Bengaluru Central City Corporation also conducted a similar cleanliness campaign, clearing a total stretch of 8.45 km and removing 21 garbage blackspots. The drive saw the participation of about 203 pourakarmikas and sanitation staff.

Bengaluru North Corporation postpones public meeting

BENGALURU, DHNS: The Bengaluru North City Corporation has postponed the public interaction meeting that was scheduled for Tuesday, which was to be chaired by M Maheshwar Rao, Chief Commissioner of the Greater Bengaluru Authority (GBA).

The corporation cited unavoidable official commitments as the reason for the postponement.

The meeting was intended to address citizen grievances related to infrastructure, roads, cleanliness, streetlight maintenance, drainage, and other civic issues.

A new date for the meeting will be announced shortly, according to officials.

Holi special train to Bihar

BENGALURU, DHNS: The South Western Railway (SWR) will operate a special train between Yeshwantpur and Katihar (Bihar) to clear post-Holi rush.

Train number 06571 will depart from Yeshwantpur at 7 am on Tuesdays (March 10, 17, 24 and 31) and arrive at Katihar at 4.30 am on Thursdays.

In the return direction, train number 06572 will depart from Katihar at 5.15 am on Fridays (March 13, 20, 27 and April 3) to arrive at Yeshwantpur at 4 am on Sundays, a media release said.

◆ IN THE CITY ◆

GENERAL

Award Ceremony: 'Ditta Mahila Prashasti' on the occasion of International Women's Day; Tushar Girinath, M Maheshwar Rao to attend; Organised by Greater Bengaluru Authority and Corporation Officers and Employees Welfare Association; Dr Rajkumar Glass House, GBA Head Office; 10 am.

Book Release: 'Bhoo Kabalike Siddhantha'; H Vishwanath, R Poornima, TK Thyagaraj to attend; Organised by Paradarshaka Media Foundation; The File Office, Hare Krishna Road, Shivananda Circle; 6.30 pm.

CULTURAL

Play: 'Angulimala'; Nayana Auditorium, Kannada Bhavan; 4 pm.

◆ CITY WEATHER ◆

FORECAST

Mainly clear sky

TEMPERATURES

Maximum	34.0°C
Minimum	20.0°C
Rainfall (as of 8:30 am)	--
Humidity (as of 5:30 pm)	30%
Sunset (Mar 9)	6:29 pm
Sunrise (Mar 10)	6:32 am
Moonrise	10:35 pm
Moonset	9:29 am

(Relevant data recorded at 5.30 pm) Source: IMD

Three youths killed in horrific crash on Kanakapura Road

Their car rear-ended a truck near Agara Cross

BENGALURU, DHNS

Rescue personnel inspect the sedan after the crash on Kanakapura Road early Sunday.

Three men, all 22 years, were killed early Sunday after their speeding car rammed the rear of a moving truck near Agara Cross on Kanakapura Road.

Kaggalipura police said the accident occurred around 1.15 am when the trio was heading towards Kanakapura in a Mitsubishi Cedia car.

Preliminary investigations suggest the vehicle was being driven at high speed. As the driver sped past a road hump, he reportedly lost control of the vehicle, leading to a violent rear-end collision with a lorry moving ahead of them.

The deceased are Saif Pasha, a resident of Tilaknagar, Yusuf Khan from Jayanagar 1st Block, and Azhar Khan, of Bismillah Nagar.

The impact was so severe that the front portion of the car was completely mangled.

While one of the youths died instantly at the spot, the other two were rushed to a nearby hospital, but succumbed to their injuries eventually.

Kaggalipura police have registered a case of accident due to negligence and speeding.

HC judge suffers shoulder injury in highway crash near Nelamangala

BENGALURU, DHNS: Karnataka High Court Judge Justice G Basavaraj suffered a shoulder injury after his car was involved in an accident on a national highway near Rayarapalya in Nelamangala on Bengaluru's northern outskirts on Sunday morning.

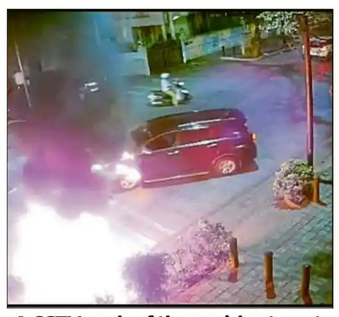
Justice Basavaraj

The incident occurred around 7.30 am when the judge was travelling to Kalaburagi.

Visibility issue

Nelamangala traffic police said the accident was triggered by a visibility issue. The driver of the police escort vehicle was reportedly blinded by the morning sun glare, causing the vehicle to hit the central median and rebound into the path of the judge's car, leading to a collision.

Justice Basavaraj suffered an injury to his left shoulder while other passengers in his vehicle escaped with minor injuries. The driver of the escort vehicle suffered serious injuries and was rushed to a local hospital for treatment. He is said to be out of danger.



A CCTV grab of the accident spot.

Woman survives as car drags scooter for 50m in Jayamahal

BENGALURU, DHNS: A 35-year-old woman escaped with minor injuries after her scooter was hit from behind and dragged nearly 50 metres by a car in Jayamahal.

The incident occurred around 9.30 pm on Jayamahal 1st Main Road on Saturday night. Friction between the scooter and the cement road surface triggered a fire.

The blaze partially gutted the two-wheeler and spread to the front left wheel of the car.

RT Nagar traffic police said the car was occupied by three to four youngsters, believed to be in their 20s.

Viral social media footage shows the occupants initially jumping out of the car in panic as the fire intensified. However, moments later, they reportedly got back into the vehicle and sped away from the spot.

"The woman was lucky to escape with minor injuries. She has filed a formal complaint," a senior police officer said. "The cement road surface played a role in the rapid ignition due to friction. The fire caused 50% damage to the scooter," he added.

Police are scanning CCTV footage to identify the car's registration number and track down the occupants.

East Corp acquires 14 acres, continues land acquisition

BENGALURU, DHNS: The Bengaluru East City Corporation has successfully acquired 14 acres of land, valued at Rs 510 crore, as part of the ongoing road-widening initiative, primarily in the Mahadevapura assembly constituency.

Corporation Commissioner DS Ramesh stated that 52 properties, which were relinquished for the road-widening project, have been taken over so far.

These properties will be used to expand key roads, including ITPL Main Road, Whitefield Main Road, and Doddanekundi (land reserved for the proposed road connecting the Outer Ring Road and the Peripheral Ring Road).

According to the government's guideline value, the 14 acres (56,722.6 sqm) of land are estimated to be worth approximately Rs 510 crore. To prevent encroachment on these properties, signboards indicating that the land is reserved for road widening and belongs to the city corporation will be installed, the commissioner added.

Given the increasing traffic density and rapid development in the East City Corporation area, the land acquired will be used for expanding major arterial and sub-arterial roads, developing footpaths, constructing cycle paths where needed, and building other necessary supporting infrastructure.

Chaos as fans swarm Jr NTR; police lathi-charge crowd

BENGALURU, DHNS

Viral videos on social media captured a chaotic scene as fans surged towards the actor, causing a few people to fall. An escalator was damaged, too.

Telugu film star Jr NTR's visit to Bengaluru turned chaotic on Sunday as police used lathis to control a crowd of fans.

Nandamuri Taraka Rama Rao, popularly known as Jr NTR, was in the city to attend the inauguration of a new facility of Krishna Institute of Medical Sciences (KIMS) Hospitals in Mahadevapura.

Eager fans gathered at the venue for a glimpse of the actor. The situation soon turned chaotic as scores entered the lobby and some jumped over barricades, police said.

Viral videos on social media showed a damaged escalator as fans surged towards the actor. A few people fell on the escalator, causing damage, police said.

Despite the frenzy, the actor remained calm and was escorted to the venue by the police and security officers. The event later continued once the situation was brought under control.

Man sets girlfriend, her parents ablaze over bike dispute

Accused had doused them with petrol; arrested

BENGALURU, DHNS

A man allegedly set his girlfriend and her parents on fire in northwestern Bengaluru after she refused to give him her scooter, police said.

Soladevanahalli police arrested the suspect, Panduranga alias Chandu, a resident of Nandini Layout, under BNS sections 109 (attempt to murder) and 351 (criminal intimidation).

Around 6.30 pm on March 6, Panduranga, in his 30s, arrived at his 27-year-old girlfriend Sumalatha's house in Tarabanahalli and demanded she hand over her Honda Activa.

Sumalatha refused and an argument ensued.

Her parents, Shreeram and Manjamma, intervened. Panduranga then poured petrol over them from a bottle he carried and set them on fire. He later fled in the auto he had arrived in. Neighbours rushed the family to hospital, where they are receiving treatment, police said.

Sumalatha had married Hanumayya in 2015 and had two children with him. Five to six years later, she met Panduranga and later moved in with him at a rented house in Nandini Layout after he promised to look after her. Sumalatha's two sons from the previous marriage stay with her mother.

"Despite not being married, we lived like husband and wife. We even have a daughter," Sumalatha said, as per the FIR.

A year ago, Panduranga brought another woman to live with them. This led to frequent fights and prompted Sumalatha to leave the house and stay with her parents, the FIR noted.

Pvt firm staffer held for killing lover, burning body to destroy evidence

BENGALURU, DHNS: The Devanahalli police have arrested an employee of a private company for allegedly murdering a 36-year-old woman and burning her body in an attempt to destroy evidence.

A senior police officer said the partially burnt and decomposed body of the woman was found on February 25 in Devanahalli Town.

During investigation, police identified the victim as Nirmala Krishnappa, a native of Chikkaballapur, who was working as housekeeping staff at the airport and living alone in a rented house in Devanahalli.

Preliminary investigations suggested that it was a case of murder. Based on CCTV footage and technical evidence, police arrested Mounesh Maitri, 34, a native of Yadgir, who was also working at the airport.

During interrogation, Maitri allegedly confessed that he strangled Nirmala with a nylon rope at his house on February 21. He later wrapped the body in a bedsheet and tarpaulin, transported it on his motorcycle, and set it on fire.

Police said the accused and the victim had been in an illicit relationship for nearly a year. At the time of the incident, Maitri's wife had gone to her parents' house for delivery. As Nirmala had started staying at Maitri's house, he feared his wife would find out about the affair, which could ruin his family life. He allegedly decided to kill Nirmala and destroy the evidence by burning her body, police said.

SIMPLE SUMMER SOLUTION

As summer nears, even the humble clay pots, often referred to as the 'poor man's fridge', are in demand. A vendor near the Deepanjalinagar metro station is seen stacking these earthen pots. DH PHOTO/RANJU P

Need a hand? Write to us

Letters of grievances are pouring in and we are doing our best to accommodate as many as possible. Readers may write in to highlight civic problems affecting their locality and we will help address them in an interactive and effective manner. Grievances and issues related to public utility agencies such as Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike (BBMP), Bangalore Water Supply and Sewerage Board (BWSSB), Bangalore Metropolitan Transport Corporation (BMTC) and Bangalore Electricity Supply Company Limited (Bescom) would be highlighted in the weekly column. The writeups, which could be accompanied by photographs highlighting the problems, will be published on Mondays. Mail your grievances to: peoplesproblems @ deccanherald.co.in

Make the footpath safe and usable

The footpath between Sumanahalli Junction and Pattegarapalya Road/Malagala (through Sattva Anugraha Apartment) is in a poor and unsafe condition. In several areas, the stones are broken or uneven, forcing pedestrians to walk on the busy and hazardous service road.

The entire stretch is obstructed by debris, construction materials, and overgrown weeds/garbage. This unsafe state forces pedestrians to walk directly into oncoming traffic, creating a significant risk to their safety.

I urge the Bengaluru West City Corporation to visit the area, assess the situation, and take immediate action to repair and realign the footpath. This will help ensure pedestrian safety, in line with the buffer zone scheme.

G Madhava Rao

Fresh water leakage since August

We, the residents of Kensington Cross Road, Halasuru, Sarvagnanagar Ward, wish to bring to your attention a persistent fresh water leakage that has been ongoing since August 2025.

Despite multiple phone calls, complaints, and visits to the BWSSB office, the issue remains unresolved. It is extremely concerning to witness the continuous wastage of such a precious resource over several months, especially considering the regular water scarcity issues faced by the city.

We urge the relevant authorities, including the BWSSB and the local civic body, to take immediate action and resolve this matter without further delay.

Residents of Kensington Cross Road

Residents of Kensington Cross Road say it is disturbing to see precious water wasted for months, especially when the city constantly grapples with water scarcity.

Rs 8.22 cr distributed to dependents of 35 deceased KSRTC staff

BENGALURU, DHNS: Transport Minister Ramalinga Reddy distributed a compensation of Rs 8.22 crore to the dependents of 35 deceased employees of the Karnataka State Road Transport Corporation (KSRTC).

Under the Saarige Suraksha Accident Insurance Scheme, Rs 1 crore each was distributed to the dependents of four employees who died in accidents.

Under the Employees' Family Welfare Compensation Scheme, Rs 3.92 crore (Rs 14 lakh each) was distributed to the dependents of 28 employees who died due to non-accidental causes such as heart attacks, cancer, and stroke.

Around Rs 30 lakh was distributed to the dependents of three deceased employees, at Rs 10 lakh each.

Reddy said the dependents of deceased employees were being appointed as drivers, conductors, KSRTC constables and technical assistant on compassionate grounds.

Dependents with requisite educational qualifications will also be appointed as junior assistants based on seniority.

He said compassionate appointments were being made in a transparent manner and advised families not to fall prey to external pressure or inducements.

According to the minister, around 1,400 appointments on compassionate grounds have been provided so far across the four RTCs.

CELEBRATING MEMORIES

Generations of 'Carmelites' at grand alumni meet

Constance Lydia, the eldest attendee, accompanied by her daughter and granddaughter, marking three generations of alumni at Mount Carmel College, on Sunday. DH PHOTO/PUSHKAR V

BENGALURU, DHNS

The corridors of Mount Carmel College turned into a living timeline on Sunday as the Autonomous Alumni Association hosted its 'Grand Alumni Meet 2026'.

Themed 'Indian Cinema Divas', the campus buzzed with the energy of more than 600 former students, spanning six decades of history.

Breaking away from traditional batch-wise reunions, this year's meet opened its doors to everyone from the class of 1960 to the recent graduates of 2023. The result was a nostalgic reunion of shared heritage, most notably visible in the numerous mother, daughter and granddaughter combinations walking across the lawns.

Among the crowd was the eldest alumna, Constance Lydia. At 88, the 1958 graduate and former first-year prefect was a beacon of the "Carmel Spirit". Accompanying her were her daughter and granddaughter, both alumni.

"Contentment is the secret to my fitness," Constance shared with a smile, recalling an era of strict discipline under the sisters. "I never compared myself to others. I am a retired teacher, and I taught for 28 years, raised my family, and today, seeing my girls here where I once stood, it is a blessing."

While the seniors reminisced about a quieter Bengaluru, younger batches from 2015 to 2018 gathered to discuss their transition into the professional world.

'Old school' sentiment

Despite the college recently becoming coeducational, the "old school" sentiment remained strong.

"There was a unique comfort in it being a women's college," noted Mary, a 2018 graduate. "But seeing the inclusivity now is also a sign of the times."

The evening featured a blend of smiles, memories and talent, with performances ranging from alumni-led standup comedy and dance to a professional music band.

Deve Gowda calls on women members of JD(S) to contest GBA polls

BENGALURU, DHNS: Former Prime Minister and JD(S) supremo H D Deve Gowda on Sunday called on women members of his party to contest the elections to five civic bodies of Greater Bengaluru Authority (GBA) in large numbers.

"In the 369 wards across GBA, check the seats which JD(S) can contest. They decide on how many women are to contest," said the former PM, at an event organised by JD(S) women's wing to mark International Women's Day.

"It was we who provided 33% reservation for women in all government departments. Today, it has been implemented in civic bodies and I am satisfied with it. Our leaders and cadre should tell this to the people," Gowda said.

Noting that women's reservation might be introduced during next Assembly and Lok Sabha elections if delimitation process is completed, he said 75-80 women may have to contest elections to the Assembly, which has 224 seats.

Reservation for 369 GBA wards out; 84 wards see changes

Assembly segments held by Oppn parties see more tweaks

NAVEEN MENEZES
BENGALURU, DHNS

The government has finally published the ward-wise reservation for all 369 wards across Bengaluru's five municipal corporations, culminating a nearly six-month-long exercise prerequisite for holding the much-delayed civic body polls.

Eighty-four wards have undergone changes in reservation quota, a critical part of the elections that can make or break the political future of candidates aspiring to contest the upcoming polls.

The wards have been reserved across five different categories: General, Scheduled Caste (SC), Scheduled Tribe (ST), Backward Class 'A', and Backward Class 'B'. About 50% of the total wards have been reserved for women.

A comparison of the draft notification released on January 8 and the final notification issued on March 7 shows that the Bengaluru West Corporation recorded the highest number of changes with with 33 wards, followed by Bengaluru North (18 wards), Bengaluru South (14 wards), Bengaluru East (12 wards) and Bengaluru Central (7 wards).

An analysis of the 369 wards across shows that constituencies represented by legislators of the opposition parties especially Malleswaram, Mahadevapura and Bommanahalli have undergone more changes in reservation quota than the Assembly segments represented by the ruling party. There are no changes in Shanthinagar, BTM Layout or Shivajinagar.

A review committee headed by Additional Chief Secretary of the Urban Development Department was tasked with analysing the suggestions and objections the government received for the draft notification. The committee also carried the mandate of ensuring that the overall quota follows the guidelines prescribed by the government.

With the publication of ward-wise reservation lists, the government has completed all the tasks required for holding the civic body elections, which are due since September 2020. Now, the responsibility of holding the elections will entirely depend on the State Election Commission (SEC), which is scheduled to publish the final electoral rolls on April 6. The SEC has committed to holding the elections by June-end.

The elections to the civic body were initially delayed when the BJP was in power. After the Congress party came to power, it enacted the Greater Bengaluru Governance Act, 2024, which gave birth to five corporations in place of Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike (BBMP). In December 2025, the government carved out 369 wards while the external boundary of the civic body remained the same.

Liquor industry apprehensive about govt's next move

Warns transition can disrupt pricing structures, margins & distribution

ASRA MAVAD
BENGALURU, DHNS

Karnataka's liquor industry is grappling with uncertainty after the government announced the scrapping of its decade-old liquor pricing mechanism in the budget.

Introduced to regulate retail prices and stabilize tax revenues, the system had long determined how manufacturers priced products across categories.

The government says the change will modernise the sector and potentially boost revenue. While industry players are happy with the step in the "right direction," they warn the transition could disrupt pricing structures, margins and distribution.

Distillers and brewers are assessing how the shift might affect costs, competition and consumer prices. The move marks a significant policy reset for the state's tightly regulated liquor trade.

"While different countries have their own ways of calculating alcohol prices, more and more countries are now moving toward the fact that pricing should be determined by Alcohol By Volume (ABV). It is the alcohol content which is being taxed, which is fair," said Nikhil Menon, cofounder of Mannheim Craft Brewery.

"This is a good step. But it might be too early to bring out the bands. The government has given an open-ended statement. More clarity is needed. There's also a possibility that things will go downhill."

The industry predicts that the policy reform will benefit the beer industry the most, sidelining Indian-Made Foreign Liquor (IMFL).

"Any policy favouring beer will sooner or later lead to lower sales of IMFL wherein the per case revenue is 4-5 times higher than beer, eventually impacting total excise revenue. While there is mention of distilleries and breweries, it seems that the government has overlooked wineries, for which separate representations were submitted," said Anant S Iyer, Director General, Confederation of Indian Alcoholic Beverage Companies.

He highlighted the possibility of a drop in sales: "If duty slab rationalisation is accompanied by an increase in duty in slabs 1 to 4, which constitutes approximately 85-90% of spirits sales in Karnataka (in the absence of country liquor) and is the primary driver for excise revenue collection, such an increase will lead to a further drop in sales in these slabs and adversely impact revenue in the medium term."

Overall, the industry backs the move for simplifying pricing slabs and promoting brewery & winery tourism.

"With our government proposing that they will allow for extended production time, allowing customers to taste alcohol on the premises will automatically cause a spike in interest among the public who will want to come down to breweries and want to understand the process of how alcohol is made. It will likely push people towards consuming better alcohol," shared Mukesh Tolani, cofounder of Toit Beer Co.

No standards to check SO2 pollution in steel plants: Study

CHIRANJEEVI KULKARNI
BENGALURU, DHNS

Lack of emission standards to regulate sulfur dioxide released by industries, especially steel plants, has a major impact on the health of the people living in the surrounding areas, a new study by the Centre for Research on Energy and Clean Air (CREA) has found.

CREA's Anubha Aggarwal and Kaiyu Chen looked into the poorly regulated stack emissions from Steel Authority of India Limited's (SAIL) Bokaro Steel Limited plant in Jharkhand.

They measured the total annual emissions from all the sources of the plant by monitoring the stack emission results and flue gas flow rate as provided in the six-monthly compliance reports from April 2023 to March 2024.

The total suspended particulate matter was estimated at 34,700 tonne per year and nitrogen oxides (NOx) were at 19,600 tonne per year. However, sulfur dioxide was at 47,700 tonne per year. The analysis showed that the sinter plant and coke oven are the two major sources of SO2 compared to steel melting shop and refractory material plant and blast furnace.

"These figures are likely an underestimation of the true pollutant emissions from this steel plant, as there are some facilities and stacks for which we do not have any data available, meaning, these estimations only account for available data," the researchers noted.

The duo simulated the emission's contribution to the ground-level pollution in the immediate vicinity of the plant and stated that the plant increases annual mean pollution of PM 2.5 by 1.2 microgram/cubic metre while the NO2 and SO2 went up by 0.6 and 1.5 microgram/cubic metre.

Health impacts

Exposure to such pollutants can lead to adverse birth outcomes, including low birth weight, a risk factor for long-term health issues. "CREA finds that pollution from the Bokaro steel plant leads to 273 (95% confidence interval: 84-475) low birthweight births, and 284 (137-301) preterm births each year," the study said, adding that the pollution damaged respiratory system leading to about 290 asthma-related emergency room visits each year.

Beyond the immediate health impact, the air pollution led to significant economic burden. The researchers estimated that people lost 1.23 lakh days of work every year due to health issues caused by the pollution.

Besides adoption of measures to check emissions, the researchers flagged the lack of national standards for SO2 for sintering plants. It also noted the lack of transparency and data availability.

"The lack of data transparency, and inconsistent data reporting–whether in frequency, measuring units, or emission sources – renders it difficult for any stakeholders including State Pollution Control Boards (SPCB) to take legal action against the polluters," the study said. Anubha Aggarwal, one of the co-authors, noted that Bokaro only serves as one alarming example of the environmental, health, and economic impacts of India's steel plants.

"The sector's weak pollution standards as well as lack of data transparency and inconsistent data reporting shield it from public scrutiny. As India moves to expand its steelmaking capacity, it is essential that we regulate the sector now before we witness more environmental deterioration and public health damage," she said.

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Budgetary allocation for minority welfare inadequate: Jamaat

BENGALURU, DHNS: The Jamaat-e-Islami Hind Karnataka has said that the state budget allocation for minority welfare appears inadequate when compared to the community's demographic share and developmental needs.

Jamaat president Mohammed Sa'ad Belgami said the budget with a total outlay of Rs 4.48 lakh crore had earmarked around Rs 3,400 crore for minority welfare programmes and schemes.

Minorities constitute nearly 15% of Karnataka's population, and allocating not even 1% of the total budget outlay to their welfare raises serious questions about equity and proportional representation in public spending, he added.

In its election manifesto, the Congress had assured the minority community that the annual allocation for minority welfare would increase to Rs10,000 crore. Dr Belgami noted that the allocation for minority welfare had reduced from Rs 4,700 crore (1.18%).

He said minorities face significant gaps in access to quality education, employment opportunities, housing and entrepreneurship support.

In this context, stronger measures were expected to expand scholarships, strengthen minority educational institutions, promote skill development and support entrepreneurship among minority youth.

He sought concrete steps in the coming budgets to ensure adequate resources are allocated for their educational, economic and social advancement.

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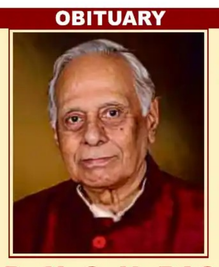

Dr N. S. N. RAO
09.05.1936 - 07.03.2026

With profound sadness, we announce the passing of Dr N. S. N. Rao, a beloved husband, brother, father, grandfather, teacher, and guide, whose life was defined by kindness, wisdom, and a deep love for learning.

A lifelong educator, teaching was his true calling. Over the course of his career, he shaped the minds of countless students and made a meaningful contribution to the field of Biostatistics.

He was the first to introduce the teaching of Biostatistics in medical colleges in India and authored one of the earliest books on the subject.

To his family, he was lovingly known as Nani, Anna, and Tatha, whose warmth and gentle presence brought joy to all who knew him.

He will be deeply missed and lovingly remembered.

Deeply Mourned by:
Nandagudi Family & near & dear ones.

Govt likely to retain most provisions of Rohith Vemula Bill

Bill's scope restricted to discrimination against SC/STs

SUJAY B M
BENGALURU, DHNS

After months of extensive deliberations, the Karnataka government is likely to retain most of the Rohit Vemula Bill drafted by the Campaign for Rohith Act to prevent caste-based discrimination at institutes of higher education, including limiting the scope of the Act for SC and ST students.

The Karnataka Rohith Vemula (Prevention of Discrimination, Exclusion or Injustice) (Right to Education and Dignity) Bill, which was placed before the Cabinet on February 26 by the Social Welfare Department, has retained all major provisions of the Karnataka Rohith Vemula (Prevention of Exclusion and Injustice in Higher Education Institutions) Bill.

The Bill is named after Rohith Vemula, a PhD scholar at the University of Hyderabad, whose suicide in January 2016 triggered a nation-wide movement questioning caste-based discrimination at higher education institutions.

On February 18, *DH* listed the major provisions of the Bill drafted by the Campaign for Rohith Act, a collective of anti-caste lawyers, scholars and activists.

These include the formation of an equity committee by each Higher Education Institution (HEI) where at least 80% of the members are from the SC/ST communities, the committee must submit its report to the HEI within 10 days of the inquiry and can impose a maximum fine of Rs 10 lakh on any HEI that violates the provisions of this Act.

Provisions such as denying re-employment/ contract renewal, demotion, suspension during inquiry and even dismissal of faculty violating the Act have also been retained.

After careful comparisons, the government decided to limit the provisions of the Bill to SC/STs, unlike the UGC (Promotion of Equity in Higher Education Institutions) Regulation 2026, which also includes OBCs. The UGC regulation has now been stayed by the Supreme Court.

The Cabinet has sent the Bill to the Home Department for its opinion. A government source explained that this was procedural, since all bills with penal provisions should be sent to the Home Department —the implementing agency— for suggestions.

With Chief Minister Siddaramaiah announcing the implementation of the Rohith Bill in the Budget, it's likely that the bill may be tabled during the ongoing Budget session of the Legislature.

Background

In its 2024 Lok Sabha poll election manifesto, the Congress promised to enact the Rohith Vemula Bill if voted to power. Later, Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi urged Siddaramaiah to implement the Bill in Karnataka.

The Campaign for Rohith Act held deliberations on the proposed legislation with Law Minister H K Patil, Higher Education Minister Dr M C Sudhakar and IT/BT Minister Priyank Kharge during the Winter Session of the Legislature in Belagavi, and submitted the Bill. The Higher Education Department then forwarded it to the Social Welfare Department.

"The passage of the Rohith Act by the Karnataka government, along with the opening of student elections, heralds new democratic possibilities for the most marginalised sections of the student body. This law will promote national integration by challenging the casteist status quo at higher education institutions," said Ashna Singh, Assistant Professor at the National Law School and one of the members of the Campaign for Rohith Act.

CARRYING BURDEN OF LIFE

Women workers carry bricks at a kiln in Chikkamagaluru on Sunday. March 8 is observed as International Women's Day every year. PTI PHOTO

All-women crew operates VB

BENGALURU, DHNS: An all-women crew operated the Vande Bharat (VB) Express between Bengaluru and Mysuru on Sunday to mark International Women's Day.

Loco pilot Balla Sivaparvathi, assistant loco pilot Aswathi S Nair, and train manager (guard) Priyadarshini operated the train number 20607 Chennai Central-Mysuru Vande Bharat Express.

The train was flagged off by Priya, Senior Divisional Operations Manager; Uma Sharma, Senior Divisional Personnel Officer (Co-ordination); Nivedita Balaraddiyavar, Divisional Commercial Manager; and Akhil Mattu, Divisional Electrical Engineer (Traction Operations).

Women staff and women passengers were greeted by presenting rose buds, according to the South Western Railway (SWR).

Loco pilot Balla Sivaparvathi and assistant loco pilot Aswathi S Nair operate the Vande Bharat on Sunday. PHOTO: SWR

Domestic workers demand legal recognition, end to 'feudal' mindset

BENGALURU, DHNS

In observance of International Women's Day, the Bangalore International Centre (BIC) hosted a seminar titled 'Her Labour, Her Law', shedding light on the systemic exploitation and legal invisibility of domestic workers in Karnataka.

Geetha Menon, Co-Founder of Stree Jagruti Samiti, spoke at the event and traced the evolution of the movement from the 1980s. She pointed out that while the economy has transitioned to an urbanised wage system, the employer-employee relationship in domestic work remains firmly entrenched in a feudal mindset.

Geetha Menon, Co-Founder, Stree Jagruti Samiti, during the session on 'Her Labour, Her Law' in Bengaluru on Sunday. DH PHOTO

"We discovered children working in residential apartments from morning to night," Geetha recalled, sharing an instance where an employer claimed the right to employ minors. She stressed that the fight for domestic workers' rights is inherently tied to the intersectionality of caste, class, and gender. The seminar also featured personal accounts of workplace discrimination.

Gayatri, treasurer of the Domestic Workers Rights Union, spoke about the ongoing inequalities in HSR Layout and surrounding areas. She described how workers are frequently denied access to toilets and are served tea in separate utensils, despite working for high-earning professionals.

"They earn lakhs, but they won't pay us fairly. If we take even a few days off, our wages are immediately cut," Gayatri explained, highlighting that, despite years of organising, government support has been minimal.

Legal expert Vinay K Sreenivasa from the Alternative Law Forum and Pushpa, president of the Domestic Workers Rights Union, both echoed the need for stronger legal frameworks to protect workers from arbitrary wage cuts and social exclusion.

Activists seek protection of women's contact info in police plaints

BENGALURU, DHNS: On International Women's Day, citizens gathered at Freedom Park to demand stronger procedural safeguards for women who seek help from the police and legal system after experiencing abuse, stalking, domestic violence, and other crimes.

The protest was organised by Abbakka Brigade, the women's wing of the human rights NGO Broseph Foundation. Demonstrators voiced concerns about the procedural hurdles women often face when navigating the justice system.

Women at the protest highlighted how survivors are frequently subjected to distressing experiences throughout the legal process, including the exposure of personal information, pressure to settle cases informally, and procedural practices that only exacerbate the psychological trauma of victims.

Protesters presented a memorandum addressed to Home Minister G Parameshwara, urging the Home department to issue a circular introducing protective measures for women complainants across all police stations.

NMDC mine not complying with eco norms: Report

CHIRANJEEVI KULKARNI
BENGALURU, DHNS

The National Mineral Development Corporation's (NDMC) Kumaraswamy mine in Sandur has come under spotlight after a factual status report by the Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change (MoEF&CC) expressed doubts about the mandatory compliance reports filed by the company.

Dola Bhattacharjee, a scientist from the MoEF&CC conducted a site inspection of NMDC's Kumaraswamy Iron Ore Mine on January 27 following a complaint by Jana Sangrama Parishath.

The report submitted in mid-February lists several non-compliances.

Among other matters, it was noted that environment clearance condition number 27 under chapter VII (Transportation) specifically bars transportation of minerals "in case of roads passing through villages/habitations" and recommends construction of a bypass road in such cases.

During the inspection, the official found that the transportation of the minerals from the mining lease area was undertaken through four routes.

While the Swamihalli railway siding route had no village in the vicinity, another route restricted to select customers traversed the outer boundary of Nandihalli village at a distance of about 60 metres from the nearest house. However, two other routes traversed villages: one through Subrayanahalli and another Ranjitpura and Narasingapura.

The official noted that the company in its compliance reports for the periods between 2021 and 2025 mentioned that the network of the roads was "far away from any type of the habitation/ village/human settlement" and mentioned three routes. "Accordingly, it appears that certain relevant facts may not have been fully presented by the PP in the half yearly environmental compliance reports," the report said.

Effluent treatment

The MoEF also flagged the non-compliance in other crucial matters. First, the company did not complete the construction of effluent treatment plant (10 kilolitre capacity), which had to be built by March 2023. At the same time, the firm was not monitoring the chemical oxygen demand in the mine run off.

The company also had no details on the budget of Rs 4.62 crore promised to address concerns raised by the public during the public hearing. Though the NMDC gave more assurances, the official noted that the company gave "no details regarding the fulfilment of the public hearing commitments".

While the company was told to install "at least four" continuous ambient air quality monitoring (CAAQM) stations, there were only three stations of which one was under repair. The data from the stations was not displayed at the gate while there was noticeable dust along stretches of the transport roads.

Parishath's Sreeshaila Aladahalli said the MoEF official has toned down the site inspection report. "The report has treated the violator NMDC with kid gloves despite major violations. How can the ministry expect private players to follow the rules when a Navaratna company of the central government has failed so miserably," he asked.

He urged the ministry to revisit its report and take strict action against the company for violations.

"The report is based on an inspection done in one day. Let the officials stay in these villages for a week to understand the impact of the pollution on the people here," he said.

Potato growing area shrinks as disease, poor seeds chip away at yield

GAYATHRI V RAJ
MYSURU, DHNS

Karnataka, one of the major potato-producing states in south India, is witnessing a sharp decline in cultivation by over 50%.

This has raised concerns, particularly in Hassan district, which accounts for over 40% of the state's potato yield. Shortage of good quality seeds, increase in costs, excess rainfall has resulted in the rotting of seed potatoes, crop damage and blight disease. Farmers are now opting for commercial crops like maize and ginger.

Alarmed by the steady decline in the number of growers, the horticulture department has begun efforts to revive cultivation.

In Hassan, potato was earlier cultivated on around 50,000 hectares. It has come down in the last 15-20 years to 6,000-8,000 hectares.

Yogesh, deputy director for horticulture, Hassan, told *DH*, "Fifteen years ago, potato was cultivated on around one lakh hectares in the state. However, its cultivation area has shrunk to less than 30,000 hectares. The focus now is on overcoming challenges like high costs of seeds, substandard seed potatoes and reliance on traditional farming".

The department is focusing on Hassan district and is taking all measures to increase cultivation to a minimum of 25,000 hectares, he said.

The Kufri Jyothi variety was grown on around 45,000 hectares up to 2005 in the district.

The horticulture department is taking measures to overcome challenges like high costs of seeds, substandard seed potatoes and reliance on traditional farming. Hassan district is the key focus area, since it is the largest contributor to the state's potato output. PHOTO FOR REPRESENTATION

In 2006-07, disease hit the Kufri Jyothi variety potato crops badly and most farmers stopped growing it, bringing down down production, Yogesh said.

Kufri Chipsona, used for making chips, was also grown, as part of a contract with companies.

The department then focused on best practices and introduced new varieties like Kufri Himalini and Kufro Karan, which are blight-tolerant, he said.

To encourage farmers, a 'Potato Mela' was held, where they had a direct interaction with experts and potato seed suppliers from Haryana, Chandigarh and Punjab.

"Potatoes are grown in Hassan during the May-August kharif season and November-February rabi crop. We are sourcing good quality seeds now," he said.

Five quintals of seed potatoes are required for one acre of cultivation.

The farmer spends around Rs80,000 from sowing to harvesting. If there is no pest attack or disease, he gets 35 quintals of yield. If traders purchase it at Rs 20 per kg, they get Rs 70,000. But the traders sells the same at Rs 30-35 per kg, farmers said.

Shankar from Appenahalli, Hassan taluk, said, "I have been growing the chips variety potato for the last 20 years. I got 100 bags of yield on my eight acres last year. If good quality seeds, pesticides and proper guidance are given, we can increase cultivation".

Suresh from Bettahalli said, "Even if the yield is less, I have been cultivating potato for 25 years now. But a farmer cannot sustain losses every year. So, the department should encourage farmers and provide proper guidance".

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Karnataka Regional Branch, Bengaluru

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Mrs. Anu Shinoj of M/s Radisson Bengaluru City Center, No. 2, Gangadhar Chetty Road, Ulsoor Bengaluru-42 has submitted an application to this office requesting to grant Licence for conduction "Recorded & Live Music" at M/s Radisson Bengaluru city Center, No. 2, Gangadhar Chetty Road, Ulsoor Bengaluru-42. Any Person/Society / any other body having any objections/suggestions in this regard may submit in writing with signature to Dy. Commissioner of Police (Administration) Office of the Commissioner of Police, No. 1, Infantry Road, Bengaluru-560001 either in person or through post within 15 days from the date of issuance of this notice. After 15 days futher action will be taken in the matter to consider the application.
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Woman member in Guruvayoor Devaswom Board after 5 decades

GURUVAYUR (KERALA), PTI: After a gap of nearly five decades, Guruvayur Devaswom, the temple body which manages the famed Guruvayur Sree Krishna Temple here, got a woman member, coincidentally on International Women's Day on Sunday.

M U Shinija has been appointed to the nine-member panel, making it the first woman appointment to the body after the Devaswom rules were amended in 1978.

According to reports, the administrative panel had women's representation during the 1970s. However, no woman had been appointed to the committee after the amendment of the Guruvayur Devaswom rules in 1978, it said. Shinija has been nominated now as a representative of the Communist Party of India (CPI).

A V Gopinath, who took oath as the new Chairman of the Guruvayur Devaswom Board, said, "It is really great that the Board got a woman member on International Women's Day."

Kashmir's political experiments fade as dynasties remain central

Abdullahs, Muftis' next gen becoming more visible

ZULFIKAR MAJID
SRINAGAR, DHNS

Nearly one and a half years after the October 2024 Assembly elections, Jammu and Kashmir's politics continues to revolve around familiar names — the Abdullahs and the Muftis.

Attempts in recent years to create alternative political formations, including parties led by Ghulam Nabi Azad and Altaf Bukhari, have struggled to gain significant traction in the Kashmir Valley after the polls.

As a result, Kashmir's politics still revolves around the National Conference (NC) and the People's Democratic Party (PDP). Yet, a slow and seamless generational transition is underway within these parties. The next generation of leaders is becoming increasingly visible, suggesting that dynastic politics is evolving, not receding, in Kashmir.

Following the abrogation of Article 370 in August 2019, Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Union Home Minister Amit Shah repeatedly criticised the Abdullah and Mufti families in public speeches, accusing them of presiding over decades of dynastic rule, corruption, and political misgovernance in the region.

Shah, in particular, argued that these parties' politics had allowed terrorism and instability to flourish in Kashmir.

That national political narrative, however, has coexisted with a different reality on the ground.

The October 2024 elections — the first Assembly polls after the abrogation of Article 370 and the reorganisation of the former state — reaffirmed the continued relevance of the Valley's established parties.

The NC emerged as the single-largest party with a strong showing across Kashmir, while the BJP consolidated its position largely in the Hindu-dominated Jammu region.

What is unfolding now is about the next phase of leadership within these parties.

Within the NC, Omar Abdullah's sons have increasingly been seen participating in party meetings, outreach programmes, and internal discussions. In the PDP, Mehbooba Mufti's daughter Iltija has taken on a more visible political role, addressing rallies, engaging with supporters and shaping the party's messaging.

Political observers describe this as a gradual process rather than a sudden handover.

"Transitions in Kashmir's mainstream parties have historically been incremental," said Prof Gul Mohammad Wani, former head of the Department of Political Science at the University of Kashmir. "What we are seeing is a slow integration of the next generation into party structures."

The NC and the PDP's dominance also reflects the limited emergence of alternative political leadership in the Valley.

"Despite attempts by new parties to enter the space, the organisational depth of the NC and PDP remains unmatched in Kashmir," said Wani. "Their grassroots networks, cadre base, and legacy continue to give them an advantage."

Familial future?

After Article 370 abrogation in 2019, Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Union Home Minister Amit Shah repeatedly criticised Abdullah and Mufti families.

Yet, a slow and seamless generational transition is underway within NC and PDP.

Within NC, Omar Abdullah's sons are increasingly participating in party activities.

In PDP, Mehbooba Mufti's daughter Iltija has taken on a more visible political role.

MEANWHILE, NC AND PDP'S DOMINANCE HAS LIMITED EMERGENCE OF ALTERNATIVE POLITICAL LEADERSHIP.

Kerala: Inland waterway being restored; 280 km commissioned

ARJUN RAGHUNATH
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, DHNS

Kerala inland waterway.

In a boost to Kerala's inland water tourism, the first-phase restoration of the a 19th-century inland waterway across the state has been completed.

The 280-km phase between Aakkulam in Thiruvananthapuram in the south and Chettuva in Thrissur in Central Kerala has become a reality.

It is part of the 616-km waterway across the state between Kovalam in Thiruvananthapuram and Bekal in Kasaragod in the North.

Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan commissioned the first phase of the project on Thursday.

The highlight of the project, the West Coast Canal, is the restoration of two tunnels — the 722-metre Sivagiri tunnel and the 340-metre Chilakoor tunnel — at Varkala in Thiruvananthapuram.

Commissioned in 1876, the tunnels cleared a major bottleneck of the inland waterway and were considered an engineering marvel of the erstwhile Travancore princely state.

The restoration could make it a major tourist attraction. As many as 579 families had to be rehabilitated.

The Sivagiri and Chilakoor tunnels are close to the known tourist destination of Varkala.

They have been spruced up with light and sound, and boat services are being offered.

Israeli strikes...

Iran, From Page 1

"The governments of Islamic countries are expected to warn the criminal America and the savage Zionist regime of such cowardly, inhumane actions as soon as possible," Ebrahim Zolfaghari, a spokesman for Iran's central military command, told state TV. "Otherwise, similar measures will be taken in the region, and if you can tolerate oil at more than $200 per barrel, continue this game."

Residents of Tehran woke up on Sunday morning to find it was still dark outside, an apocalyptic sight created by thick black smoke billowing from oil depots struck by Israel.

Israel also struck southern Lebanon and Beirut and Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu promised "many surprises" for the next phase of the conflict.

Tehran has vowed to go after US assets in the region.

Saudi intercepted a wave of drones headed for targets including the diplomatic quarter in its capital Riyadh, Kuwait said an attack hit fuel tanks at its international airport and Bahrain reported a water desalination plant had been damaged.

Earlier Sunday, Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi said a US airstrike damaged an Iranian desalination plant on Qeshm Island, warning that in doing so "the US set this precedent, not Iran"..

Iran's Revolutionary Guards said they had enough supplies to continue their aerial drone and missile war over the Middle East for up to six months.

Meanwhile, US President Donald Trump again refused to rule out sending American ground troops into Iran.

Guards spokesman Ali Mohammad Naini said Iran had so far used only first- and second-generation missiles, but would use "advanced and less-used long-range missiles" in the coming days.

Nepal's youngest PM Balendra Shah studied engg in Bengaluru

'Was a quiet, disciplined student & rapper then'

PUSHKAR V
BENGALURU, DHNS

Balendra Shah

From a rapper known for his outspoken songs to becoming Nepal's youngest prime minister at 35, Balendra Shah has taken an unusual path to leadership. The young leader also shares a connection with Namma Bengaluru.

Shah studied MTech at Nitte Meenakshi Institute of Technology, Yelahanka, from 2016 to 2018.

Shreyas A V, Deputy Registrar and Assistant Professor in Civil Engineering at the institute, recalled Shah as a quiet and disciplined student.

Shah then studied MTech in Structural Engineering under the institute's foreign student quota. Three students from Nepal were part of that batch, according to Shreyas.

"He was a very good student, scoring CGPA above 9. He worked hard and was sincere with his studies," he added. Beyond academics, Shah was also known on campus for his interest in music. "He was already a rapper then. He was talented and friendly with classmates," Shreyas said.

Students from that batch remember Shah as someone who kept a low profile but focused on his work. Some former classmates have also shared that he balanced studies with music, often writing and performing Nepali rap music while pursuing his MTech degree.

One of his classmates who is currently working in a private firm recalled Shah often spoke about music during college days.

"He loved rap and used to talk about writing lyrics. Even while studying engineering, music was always part of his life," the classmate told *DH*.

Shreyas said Shah's rise to national leadership came as a pleasant surprise.

"I wish him all the best. To see your student become the leader of a country is not a small thing. I feel very happy and hope to meet him someday," he added.

Shah first rose to prominence in Nepal's public life as a young political figure known for his outspoken views and youth following before entering national politics. His academic years in Bengaluru, his former professor said, reflected the discipline and commitment that would later define his public career.

His classmate added: "In 2022, we read in the newspapers that Balen had become a mayor, and I started following the news. He removed illegal structures, worked on waste management and took up several initiatives that connected with younger generations. This news brings joy, knowing that someone who was around me has now become the prime minister."

Vibrant celebration of senior citizens at Hiriyara Utsava 2026

BENGALURU, DHNS

Senior citizens perform at 'Hiriyara Utsava' on Sunday. DH PHOTO

Over 200 senior citizens from various elder-care homes and day-care centers across the city swapped their usual routines for a lively day of celebration at 'Hiriyara Utsava 2026' on Sunday.

Held at the Hudson Memorial Community Centre in observance of the International Day of Older Persons, the event was a collaborative effort between the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, Nightingales Medical Trust (NMT), and V-the-Volunteers.

The festival offered a platform for seniors to showcase their talent through music, dance, and interactive games, fostering a sense of community and joy among participants.

In his inaugural address, former high court judge Justice R Gururajan emphasised the importance of bridging the gap between government schemes and their intended beneficiaries. "It is crucial to raise awareness to ensure that welfare measures effectively reach senior citizens at the grassroots level," he said.

Balasubramani, Public Relations Officer of the Karnataka State Legal Services Authority, provided an overview of the Maintenance and Welfare of Parents and Senior Citizens (MWPSC) Act, 2007.

Mahadev, sub-inspector at the Halasuru Gate police station, spoke about the 'Aasare' and 'Mane Mane Police' initiatives, both designed to ensure the safety and protection of elderly citizens.

S Premkumar Raja, secretary of NMT, called for increased public investment in elder care. "We must raise awareness about the MWPSC Act and expedite pending cases. Moreover, more investment is urgently needed in elder and dementia care to meet the growing needs of our aging population," Raja remarked.

The event concluded with a prize distribution during the valedictory ceremony, attended by Ashok DR, Director of the Department for the Empowerment of Differently Abled and Senior Citizens.

MEALS AND MORE

Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi interacts with female students while having meals on the occasion of International Women's Day, in Kerala on Sunday. PTI PHOTO

◆ WEATHER ◆

Overview: Dry weather prevailed over the State.

Forecast March 9: Partly cloudy sky. Maximum and Minimum temperature very likely to be around 34°C and 21°C respectively.

INTERIOR NORTH

Stations	Max	Min	Rain
Belagavi	35.1	16.6	0.0
Bidar	36.4	16.0	0.0
Vijayapura	36.5	22.0	0.0
Dharwad	35.6	18.4	0.0
Haveri	36.2	20.8	0.0
Kalaburagi	39.8	2280	0.0
Raichur	37.0	18.4	0.0
COASTAL			
Honnavar	32.9	22.5	0.0
Karwar	34.6	23.4	0.0
Shirali	NA	NA	NA
Mangaluru	32.5	24.0	0.0

INTERIOR SOUTH

Stations	Max	Min	Rain
Agumbe	36.6	19.9	0.0
Bengaluru	34.3	21.4	0.0
Ballari	NA	NA	NA
Chamarajanagar	--	--	--
Chikkamagaluru	--	--	--
Chitradurga	34.9	19.4	0.0
Davangere	36.5	18.5	0.0
Hassan	33.4	14.1	0.0
Mysuru	33.4	19.8	0.0
Madikeri	--	--	--
Kolar	34.4	15.2	0.0
OTHER STATIONS			
New Delhi	35.0	21.0	NIL
Kolkata	32.0	23.0	NIL
Mumbai	34.0	25.0	NA
Chennai	29.0	24.0	NA
Pune	36.0	21.0	NA
Hyderabad	33.0	21.0	NA
Th'puram	30.0	24.0	NIL

KARNATAKA POWER TRANSMISSION CORPORATION LIMITED
(CIN: U40109KA1999SGC025521)

TENDER NOTIFICATION
(Through Karnataka public procurement portal only)

KPTCL, Invites bids from the eligible bidders for the following works:

No. CEE/OPR/KLB/SEE (O)/AEE-2/2025-26/15077, 15089, 15101, 15113, 15137 & 15149 Date: 03-03-2026

1) Bid Enquiry No: KPTCL/2025-26/SS/110KV Metri Call-4 Dtd: 03.03.2026. **"Providing additional 1x10MVA, 110/11kV Power Transformer along with additional switchgear at 110/11kV Metri sub-station in Hospet Taluk, Ballari District." Call-4.**

2) KPTCL/2025-26/TL/Gudekote LILO Call-2 Date: 03.03.2026. **"Re-construction of existing 66Kv Coyote LILO Line by Drake LILO on 110Kv DC Towers from existing 66Kv Badaeladaku (Kudligi) Hanagal SC line (Proposed DC Line) to the existing 66/11Kv Gudekote S/s for a distance of 1.890Kms in Kudligi Taluk, Vijayanagara District (including Dismantling and civil works) of all materials / equipments, Call-2".**

3) KPTCL/2025-26/SS/66kV Punabghatta 8MVA Replacement Call-3 Dtd: 03-03-2026. **"Replacement of 1x8 MVA, 66/11Kv Power Transformer by 1x20MVA 66/11Kv Power Transformer at 66/11Kv sub-station, Punabghatta in Harpanahalli Taluk, Vijayanagara District Call-3."**

4) KPTCL/2025-26/SS/66Kv Gudekote 12.5 MVA Enhancement call-3 Dtd: 03.03.2026. **"Enhancement of 6.3 MVA, 66/11Kv Power Transformer by 12.5MVA 66/11Kv Power Transformer at 66/11Kv sub-station, Gudekote in Kudligi Taluk, Vijayanagara District, Call-3."**

5) KPTCL/2025-26/ SS/Sirigeri Cross Call-3 Dtd: 03.03.2026. **"Replacement of existing 2x10MVA 110/11kV by 2x20MVA, 110/11kV Power Transformer and providing additional MCVCB switchgear at 110kV Sirigeri Cross S/s in Siruguppa Tq. Ballari Dist. on Partial Turnkey Basis Call-3."**

6) KPTCL/2025-26/SS/66Kv Kudligi 12.5 MVA Enhancement call-3 Dtd: 03.03.2026. **"Enhancement of 6.3 MVA, 66/11Kv Power Transformer by 12.5MVA 66/11Kv Power Transformer at 66/11Kv sub-station, Kudligi in Kudligi Taluk, Vijayanagara District, Call-3."**

No. CEE/OPR/KLB/SEE(O)/AEE-3/2025-26/15241 & 15266 Date: 06-03-2026

7) KPTCL/ SS /2025-26/ Betegera Enhancement Dtd : 29-12-2025 (Call-2). **Enhancement of 1×10MVA, 110/11kV Power Transformer by 1×20MVA, 110/11kV Power Transformer at 110/33/11kv Betegera on Partial Turnkey Basis in Koppal Taluk, Koppal District"**

8) KPTCL/TL/25-26/Yeradona LILO line Dtd. 19-12-2025 (Call-2) **Construction of 110kV LILO line from the tapping point of existing 110kV Munirabad-II line to 110/11kV Yeradona sub-station along with construction of terminal bay at 110/11kV Yeradona sub-station in Karatagi Tq, Koppal Dist for a distance of 4.936 km by utilizing the 110kV DC towers.**

The bids will be received through kpp portal mode only. The detailed notification regarding the subject enquiry in the E-Procurement process can be obtained by logging on to KPTCL website: **https://kptcl.karnataka.gov.in** on hyperlink "E procurement KPTCL" or directly you can access the tendering website: **https://kppp.karnataka.gov.in** on or after **Date: 09-03-2026 (Sl. No. 1 & 7) and Date: 11-03-2026 (Sl. No. 8)**. Further details can be obtained from the Office of the undersigned.

Sd/-, Chief Engineer (Electy),
Transmission (Operations) Zone, KPTCL, Prasarana Bhavana, Sedam Road, Kalaburagi - 585106.

Man dies in police custody in TN, family alleges torture

MADURAI, PTI

High tension prevailed at the Madurai Government Rajaji Hospital on Sunday after a 26-year-old youth, arrested in connection with an assault case, died in judicial custody.

The parents of the deceased have alleged brutal custodial torture and caste-based discrimination by the Manamadurai police.

The deceased, identified as Akash Delison (26), a graduate from Krishnarajapuram, was arrested alongside another youth, Guna (23), following a CCTV-recorded sickle attack on two individuals in Zion Nagar on Friday.

According to police sources, Akash sustained a fracture in his right leg after falling while attempting to evade arrest. Following a remand order by the Manamadurai Judicial Magistrate until March 18, he was admitted to the prisoners' ward at the Madurai Government Rajaji Hospital for treatment. Authorities stated that Akash developed "breathing difficulties" early Sunday morning and passed away shortly after.

However, the youth's parents, Rajesh Kannan and Anandhi, who spoke to reporters at the hospital, levelled grave accusations against the personnel of the Manamadurai police station.

The father alleged that the police took Akash to a secluded forested area under the guise of an investigation. "They placed stones on his legs and beat him until his bones shattered," Rajesh Kannan told reporters.

The family further alleged that the police targeted Akash using casteist slurs during the assault.

The mother, Anandhi, claimed that police had previously threatened the family, stating, "If we get our hands on your son, we will kill him."

The bereaved family has refused to accept Akash's body, demanding personal intervention of VCK Chief and MP Thol Thirumavalavan.

Human rights activist Henry Tiphagne issued a video statement on Sunday condemning the police brutality. He claimed that Delison's death is the 26th custodial death.

Alagiri supporters prepare to join AIADMK after DMK snub

E T B SIVAPRIYAN
CHENNAI, DHNS

Unpardoned and cold-shouldered by their former party for over a decade, longtime supporters of M K Alagiri — a DMK strongman from Madurai before he was expelled in 2014 — have begun jumping ship to the AIADMK to "secure" their political future.

Madurai Corporation former deputy mayor P M Mannan joined the AIADMK last week. Former mayor G Thenmozhi is likely to follow suit with her supporters.

A few other functionaries are also mulling joining the AIADMK as the DMK refuses to re-induct them after their expulsion in 2014.

Alagiri, the elder son of late M Karunanidhi, was first suspended from the DMK and later expelled after a confrontation with his father over the prominence given to his younger brother, M K Stalin, the current DMK president and Tamil Nadu chief minister.

His efforts to patch up with the DMK failed during his father's time. Even after Karunanidhi's death, party seniors felt re-admitting the former Union Minister and his supporters would only mean going against his decision.

Sources told *DH* that Alagiri sent multiple messages to the DMK leadership to accommodate his supporters in the interest of their political future, but they were all rejected. Mannan, known to be a grassroots worker and an organiser, joined the AIADMK after Alagiri's green signal. The AIADMK is likely to field him from one of Madurai's Assembly seats. A decision on Thenmozhi will be taken once she formally joins the party.

The induction of Alagiri's supporters will be a boost to AIADMK ahead of the Assembly elections, with the DMK hit by factional feud in Madurai due to differences between Commercial Taxes Minister P Moorthy, district secretary G Thalapathi, and IT Minister Palanivel Thiaga Rajan.

DECCAN HERALD
ESTABLISHED 1948

India's position on war underwhelming

India's response to the war in West Asia, which started with the Israeli-American attack on Iran, and its conduct during the war, have come under increasing scrutiny. The war has spread farther from Iran and its neighbourhood, and reached India's backyard with the US sinking an Iranian warship near Sri Lankan waters. It has entered India's kitchens with the increase in LPG prices. India's positions have raised questions from the beginning. Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Israel just before the attack was widely seen as inappropriate. His statements in Israel were seen as too partisan, favouring Israel. India did not condemn the attack but only expressed concern over it, and called the US, Israel and Iran to "exercise restraint and avoid escalation," equating the aggressors and the victim.

The killing of Iran's supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, other leaders, and some 160 school children did not elicit condemnation from India. Since the war is illegal and is being waged without a formal declaration, these could only be taken as assassinations and crimes. It took five days for India to express formal condolences over Khamenei's killing. Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri signed the condolence register in the Iran embassy in Delhi on Thursday, but it has invited the question whether someone at a higher level in the government should have signed it. India had instructed its envoys in other countries not to sign the condolence registers there. Another matter of concern is the sinking of *IRIS Dena* soon after it left Indian waters where it had participated in a naval exercise. India may not have been responsible for the safety of the ship, but the fact that the attack took place in an area that India considers its backyard is disquieting. It is also concerning that we could not detect the presence of other vessels operating within our horizon and mount rescue operations in time after receiving a distress message. Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Aragchi has described the ship as a "guest of India's Navy" and there may be a diplomatic message in it.

While our govt was dithering, the US torpedoed an Iranian ship in our backyard

India's claim of strategic autonomy has been seriously questioned with the US Treasury Secretary's announcement of a 30-day waiver to "allow" India to buy Russian oil. The government has always said the country bought oil from various sources on the basis of its national interest. After the US statement, India has said that it did not need Washington's permission to buy Russian oil. It is not convincing though. In recent times, statements from the US have invited too many interpretations in India. The word "allowed" cannot be interpreted to carry the opposite meaning.

Time to erase blot on police system

Karnataka Director General of Police (DGP) M A Saleem has ordered the withdrawal of police personnel deployed as orderlies in the homes of senior officers, redirecting them to regular policing duties. The decision is welcome, but given the fate of earlier attempts, it warrants scepticism. The orderly system, where constables are assigned to perform domestic chores at officers' residences, is a colonial legacy. The latest order seeks to deploy some 3,000 personnel currently engaged in such duties back to core policing work. The government has simultaneously sanctioned a limited number of civilian 'follower' posts and introduced an allowance enabling officers to hire domestic help privately. On paper, the reform appears sound. In practice, however, the state has travelled this road before. The system was officially banned in 2017 following widespread criticism and protests within the constabulary. The prohibition proved largely cosmetic, with many orderlies quietly returning to officers' residences once the furore died down.

This is not a Karnataka-specific malaise. Across India, the orderly system has survived repeated condemnation. The National Police Commission recommended its abolition decades ago, arguing that it demoralises the rank and file and diverts manpower from essential policing duties. The courts, too, have been scathing. The Madras High Court has described the practice as a form of "colonial slavery". Even political leaders have expressed outrage: Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan described the system as a form of slavery and a violation of human rights. Some states have begun experimenting with alternatives. Tamil Nadu has introduced district-level monitoring committees headed by the collector to track compliance, while Telangana has linked the withdrawal of orderlies to broader police reform initiatives. Yet, the powerful police officers' lobby has persistently foiled the efforts of the courts and the governments.

Will DGP Saleem's efforts to bring orderlies back to policing succeed?

The state spends lakhs of rupees recruiting and training each constable to enforce the law, investigate crime, and maintain public order. Instead, many begin their careers chauffeuring officers' families, shopping for groceries, and polishing shoes. Such misuse of trained personnel is both humiliating and wasteful. If the latest order is to succeed where others have failed, accountability is essential. Officers who continue to retain orderlies must face strict disciplinary action. Periodic audits and independent oversight will be necessary to ensure that the practice does not survive under new labels. The orderly system is not merely an administrative irregularity; it is a symbol of feudalism within the police hierarchy. Ending it will require more than circulars; it calls for sustained political will and institutional courage.

GEOPOLITICS AND FISCAL STRAIN

The cost of Trump's triple gamble

The Iran war, tariffs, and the One Big Beautiful Bill Act are weakening the fiscal foundations of the US

DEEPANSHU MOHAN, SONAKSHI GARG AND SAKSHAM RAJ

The economic consequences of the second Trump administration are emerging from the simultaneous escalation of war, protectionism, and fiscal expansion.

Three recent developments illustrate this convergence: the launch of Operation Epic Fury, the US Supreme Court's curtailment of presidential authority under the International Emergency Economic Powers Act (IEEPA), and the passage of the One Big Beautiful Bill Act (OBBBA).

Each policy has been framed as essential to restoring American strength. Yet together they are generating a form of "triple economic attrition".

The economic implications of Operation Epic Fury are already extending beyond battlefield costs.

Within the initial 24 hours of the operation, the US military expenditure was estimated at roughly $779 million. The deployment of 200 Tomahawk cruise missiles, individually priced at $2.2 million, alongside B-2 bomber sorties, which cost millions of dollars per mission, illustrate the costs of modern warfare.

As the campaign expanded, estimates suggested that the first week of operations could approach the $5 billion mark in direct military spending and the total costs of the strikes could skyrocket to $210 billion, with the hostilities' monthly expenditure being close to $65-$95 billion.

These calculations lead to the implication that contemporary war is capital-intensive, meaning cost asymmetry often favours lower-tech adversaries.

This occurrence is detailed in the 'cost-exchange ratio framework', where defensive systems are more expensive than the weapons they intercept.

For instance, a Patriot interceptor missile costs roughly $4 million. In contrast, Iran's Shahed-136 drones are estimated to cost between $20,000 and $50,000, meaning a single drone warrants mechanisms that cost almost 200 times the price of the attacking weapon.

The military campaign also invites scrutiny over strategic depletion. Sustained operations risk the rapid consumption of munitions like Tomahawk cruise missiles and SM-3 interceptors, characterised by their lengthy production timelines.

Also, many of these weapons have been stockpiled with potential contingencies involving China. Their use in West Asia consequently carries the strategic implication that the United States may be expending its valuable deterrence assets in a secondary conflict.

The war's economic impact has extended beyond defence budgets. Almost 20% of the world's oil supply passes through the Strait of Hormuz, and recent instability has pushed Brent crude prices to about $80 per barrel. Energy price surges morph into quasi-taxes on consumers, and reinforce inflationary pressures. Elevated oil prices can also increase fiscal revenues for Russia, undermining the West's attempts to levy sanctions.

However, if considered that war imposes fiscal strain externally, the administration's trade policy is simultaneously reshaping the domestic economy.

Policy volatility

Trump's second-term trade policy is more legally unstable. On February 20 2026, the US Supreme Court ruled that IEEPA does not authorise the President to impose tariffs, invalidating the Reciprocal Tariffs.

In response, the administration shifted to Section 122 of the Trade Act of 1974, introducing temporary 15% universal tariffs. Nevertheless, the potential of a $142 billion refund for firms that had paid tariffs persists.

This regulatory instability has created tariff volatility. Effective average US tariffs fell from 16% to 9.1% after the court's ruling, stabilising at 13.7% under the new policy. Evidence theorises that markets tolerate cost shocks better than policy uncertainty, with Federal Reserve surveys indicating declining capital expenditure among import-export firms.

Tariffs also act like regressive consumption taxes. Studies from the New York Fed illustrate that 90-96% of tariff costs are borne by American consumers. Tariff impact on sectors also varies. For instance, US steel producers benefited. However, downstream manufacturers in automotives, appliances and electronics have been disadvantaged.

These disruptions have further instigated manufacturing fatigue. Counter to the promise of a manufacturing boom, 108,000 manufacturing jobs were lost in 2025, with predictions that trade uncertainty could delay $490 billion in investment through 2029.

Yet, even as tariffs and military operations raise fiscal pressure, domestic tax policies shrink the government's revenue base.

Fiscal expansion and the new American deficit

The OBBBA represents a combination of tax cuts and spending reductions. Key components of the policy include $4.5 trillion tax cuts and $1.4 trillion reductions in spending. However, such actions are comprehended to increase federal deficits by approximately $3.4 trillion over the next 10 years.

With federal borrowing rising to finance military operations and the tax reductions embedded in the Act, Treasury issuance is likely to expand.

Larger deficits tend to push up long-term government bond yields, increasing borrowing costs. In such conditions, higher public borrowing risks crowding out private investment, amplifying the investment slowdown emerging from policy uncertainty.

To finance the tax reductions, the Act depends on a significant reduction in the financing of social programmes. Consequently, the effect of the administrative action is approximately $800 billion in Medicaid cuts and $295 billion in SNAP deductions, with potentially 17 million Americans losing health coverage.

Although these spending cuts reduce federal outlays, they suppress consumption among lower-income households, which typically exhibit a higher marginal propensity to consume, partially offsetting the stimulative effects of tax reductions. The OBBBA, therefore, redistributes benefits towards corporations and higher-income households.

Taken together, the second Trump administration's strategy seeks to assert geopolitical dominance, revive industrial production, and lower taxes simultaneously. Yet these policies are intersecting in ways that may undermine their own objectives. The combined effect is a policy triad that shifts growing economic risk onto the federal balance sheet and ultimately onto American consumers.

The paradox is clear: policies designed to restore American economic primacy may instead be weakening the fiscal foundations that sustain it.

(Deepanshu is Professor and Dean at O P Jindal Global University and a visiting professor at LSE and University of Oxford. Saksham and Sonakshi are research analysts with CNES, O P Jindal Global University)

RIGHT IN THE MIDDLE

Lessons from a broken chair

A Geneva monument reiterates the need for inclusive societies

PRASANNA S HARIHAR

Trips—overseas or domestic, business or pleasure—are invariably filled with flavours of fun and frolic. They feel incomplete if most tourist spots are not visited. But it is the magnetic pull of certain places that ensures they are never left out—like the Taj Mahal, Buckingham Palace, the White House, the Eiffel Tower, and so on.

The Broken Chair, at the heart of the city of Geneva, stands tall with that same magnetic presence. Made of more than five tons of wood and rising to a gigantic height of 12 metres, it commands attention. For the many political and diplomatic entourages that frequent this city, the installation serves as a reminder of how peace, once shattered, demands a humongous effort to restore.

Commissioned in 1997 by the NGO Handicap International as a symbolic representation of its opposition to landmines and cluster bombs, the sculpture highlights their dangers to society and the harm inflicted on the fragile fabric of peace in nations. One leg of the chair is splintered and jagged, representing the victims. Yet the chair defies gravity and stands tall.

Geneva is often called a 'Peace Capital' and serves as a diplomatic centre of the world. It hosts several international organisations such as the UNHCR, the ILO, the WHO, the WTO, the UNCTAD, the International Committee of the Red Cross, and many others. Each plays a different role in advancing the upliftment of nations through inclusive growth.

My work brought me to Geneva frequently almost a decade ago. Commuting in a bus—if not walking—was how I got around. My IT project teams worked at three of the offices mentioned above. I would spend the pre-lunch hours at one office and then, braving the cold, enjoy the picturesque walk to the other two. A three-minute walk from the UNHCR office, I would often pause in front of this monument and ruminate on what catastrophic damage the explosion may have caused—deaths, injuries, and some lives permanently altered, with some victims rendered disabled. It was, if you will, a rude awakening to the harsh realities unfolding around the world.

Back home, it was customary to discuss the nuances of a business trip with my family. As I explained to them the significance of this chair, my uncle suddenly interjected: "Listen to this. Last week at a marriage hall, I fell off a plastic chair with slightly unstable legs. I have never approved of them as dependable chairs, especially when the person seated has the habit of rocking on its hind legs. These chairs come cheap, but the damage from a fall can prove costly."

I was momentarily waylaid in my narration—a cluster bomb of sorts that handicapped my train of thoughts.

Yet the larger point remains. Many countries have done their best to build inclusive societies for persons with disabilities. We, in India, still have much more to do if we are to achieve true social progress and take lessons from a broken chair—that peace is the ultimate tranquil existence.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Hypocrisy unmasked in Bihar's power play

Reports of Nitish Kumar's son joining JD(U) and potentially becoming deputy CM of Bihar suggest dynastic politics is at play. Nitish Kumar has served 10 terms as Bihar's CM, opposing dynastic rule, yet launches his son Nishant Kumar as deputy chief minister. He resigned as CM, became a Rajya Sabha member, and eyes a Union Minister post, possibly gifting Bihar's CM seat to BJP. Prime Minister Narendra Modi's stance against dynastic politics seems selectively blind. Both leaders appear to oppose dynastic rule publicly but nurture it privately. It is hightime this perpetuation of dynastic rule which is an anathema to democracy is done away with at the earliest.

M Basavaraj, Davanagere

Alarming negligence

I refer to the editorial, 'Industrial accidents: The cost of apathy' (Mar 7). Negligence towards worker safety in small-scale units is alarming. Untrained workers, including women and children, are hired cheaply, and safety measures are lacking. Authorities must enforce safety regulations and ensure proper training and protection for vulnerable workers.

Annlynn V V, Bengaluru

Issue marks card

Apropos 'Students urge state-run universities to issue hard copies of marks card' (Mar 8), authorities should address this employment-related issue urgently. Academic credentials aim to secure employment, yet universities deny hard copies of marks cards despite collecting fees. Many students have lost opportunities due to this. The government should prioritise resolving this issue.

H V K Bhatta, Bengaluru

Our readers are welcome to email letters to: **letters@deccanherald.co.in** (only letters emailed – not handwritten – will be accepted). All letters must carry the sender's postal address and phone number.

SPEAK OUT

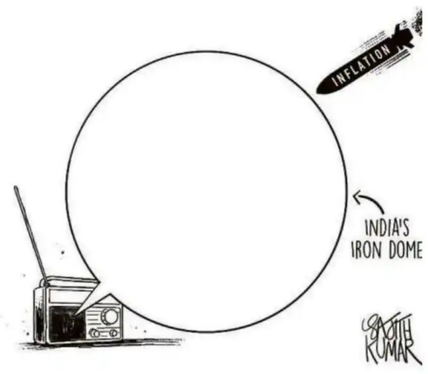
We're winning the war by a lot. We've decimated their whole evil empire. It'll continue I'm sure for a little while...The war itself is going unbelievably. It's as good as it can be.

Donald Trump, US president

I'm fed up to the ears of old men dreaming up wars for young men to die in.

George McGovern

TO BE PRECISE



IN PERSPECTIVE

Unlocking women's economic agency

Access to financial services has not translated into comparable gains in women's wealth creation

CHITRA SARUPARIA

Over the past decade, India has witnessed one of the world's largest expansions in financial inclusion. Millions of women have opened bank accounts, gained access to digital payment systems, and begun receiving government transfers directly into their accounts. These changes have significantly strengthened women's financial visibility and participation within the economy. In many households today, women play a far greater role in managing day-to-day finances than they did a decade ago.

This transformation has been widely celebrated as a milestone in India's development journey. Financial inclusion has expanded economic participation and reduced the distance between citizens and the formal financial system. However, inclusion alone does not automatically translate into economic empowerment or long-term financial security.

Despite this progress, an important challenge remains. The recently released Women's Financial Prosperity Index reveals that access to financial services has not translated into comparable gains in women's wealth creation. India's score on the index — around 28 out of 100 — highlights a significant gap between financial inclusion and financial prosperity. Opening bank accounts is only the first step. Real empowerment requires economic agency — the ability to invest, accumulate assets, and build long-term financial security.

India's achievements in financial inclusion are nevertheless substantial. According to the Global Findex database, a large majority of Indian women now have bank accounts, reflecting dramatic progress over the past decade. Initiatives promoting digital payments and expanding self-help groups have further strengthened women's engagement with formal financial systems. Direct benefit transfers have also ensured that welfare payments increasingly reach women directly, improving transparency and financial participation.

However, financial inclusion does not automatically lead to wealth creation. One of the most striking indicators of the prosperity gap is women's limited participation in financial investments. Only a small proportion of women invest in market-linked financial instruments such as equities, mutual funds, or pension portfolios. Estimates suggest that fewer than 10% of women participate in such investments, compared with over 20% of men.

Many women continue to rely on traditional forms of saving, such as bank deposits, gold, or informal savings arrangements. These options offer safety and liquidity but generally generate lower returns than diversified financial investments. As a result, the powerful compounding benefits of long-term investments remain underutilised.

The economic implications of this disparity are considerable. Studies suggest that if women participated in wealth creation at levels comparable to men, India could unlock nearly Rs 40 lakh crore in economic value. In an economy aspiring to sustain high growth and strengthen global competitiveness, such untapped potential represents a major opportunity. Expanding women's role in wealth creation would therefore not only advance gender equality but also strengthen the country's long-term economic resilience.

Several structural factors contribute to this gap. Women's labour force participation remains lower than that of men and below levels observed in many other large economies. Limited access to stable employment reduces women's ability to generate independent income and restricts their capacity to save and invest.

Even when women earn income, financial decision-making within households often limits their control over long-term investments. Women's earnings frequently support essential household expenditures such as food, education, and healthcare. These contributions strengthen family welfare but leave a limited scope for personal asset accumulation.

Asset ownership also remains highly unequal. Men across many parts of India disproportionately own property, land, and business assets. Limited ownership reduces women's access to credit and financial leverage.

Financial literacy represents another important barrier. The rapid expansion of digital finance, fintech platforms, and investment products has transformed the financial landscape. However, many women remain unfamiliar with investment strategies, portfolio diversification, and retirement planning. Limited financial knowledge often reinforces cautious saving behaviour and discourages participation in capital markets.

Addressing these challenges requires a shift in policy priorities. Financial education must become a central component of empowerment strategies. Women need greater exposure to investment literacy, risk management, and long-term financial planning through community networks, self-help groups, and digital learning platforms. At the same time, policies that strengthen women's employment opportunities, property ownership, and access to credit can play a crucial role in creating pathways to sustainable wealth.

India's aspiration to become a developed nation by 2047 depends not only on economic growth but also on inclusive prosperity. When women move from financial inclusion to financial prosperity, the benefits extend across households, markets, and the broader economy.

(The writer is associate professor of economics and director, Centre for Economics, Law and Public Policy at National Law University, Jodhpur)

Bengal politics and the new grammar of Hindutva

ISMAIL SALAHUDDIN

Elections in West Bengal have long been noisy affairs, filled with slogans, songs, street meetings, and fierce public argument. Politics here has usually announced itself loudly through rallies, posters, and confrontations that leave little doubt about who is contesting power and how. But what is unfolding ahead of the next Assembly election feels different, not because it is more dramatic, but because it is deliberately quieter.

Across towns, villages, and neighbourhoods in Bengal, workers linked to the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh are moving without banners or microphones, speaking not from stages but inside homes, courtyards, tea stalls, and small gatherings. The campaign is described as Jagaran — an "awakening", a word that suggests care and moral urgency rather than overt politics. Yet the message is unmistakably political: that Hindus are under threat, that they have been ignored, and that they must act together.

What makes this moment significant is not the presence of Hindutva politics in Bengal, which has been visible for years, but the method. This is not a campaign built around spectacle; it is built around familiarity. It does not ask people to change their views overnight but invites them to reinterpret what they already feel. Fear is not introduced suddenly. It is nudged, affirmed, and gradually made to seem reasonable.

This strategy works in ways that are difficult to challenge. When a political message arrives through a neighbour rather than a leader, through a shared grievance rather than a speech, it feels less like persuasion and more like recognition. People begin to say, "This is what I was already thinking", even when the thought has been carefully planted and patiently repeated.

Long before social media or WhatsApp groups, thinkers tried to understand how societies drift toward exclusion without recognising what they are becoming. The philosopher Theodor Adorno argued that authoritarian politics rarely begins with open hatred or violence. It grows through emotional habits — discomfort with difference, a desire for rigid order, and the projection of social anxieties onto selected groups. People are rarely forced into such beliefs; they are trained into them through repetition and reassurance.

Seen through this lens, the Jagaran campaign in Bengal is less about slogans than about shaping feelings. It works gradually, encouraging people to accept the idea that cultural identity is under siege and that political action is a form of self-defence. The language used is often careful, even soft. It speaks of dignity, neglect, and pride. Yet over time it narrows the space of belonging, quietly teaching people who counts and who does not.

The cultural dimension of this strategy is equally important.

In Bengal today, echoes of this process are increasingly visible. Religious festivals often carry political meaning without explicitly declaring themselves political events. Public celebrations are framed as assertions of unity and strength. Participation becomes a sign of loyalty, while absence begins to invite suspicion. None of this needs to be formally enforced; it spreads because it offers emotional satisfaction to those who feel included within the circle.

The contemporary media environment deepens this process. As Noam Chomsky and Edward S Herman argued in their work on how consent is shaped, power often operates by defining the boundaries of what appears reasonable to discuss. In Bengal today, this influence travels not only through television debates but also through WhatsApp forwards, neighbourhood rumours, and emotionally charged stories that circulate without verification. Such messages reinforce the quiet conversations taking place on the ground, allowing suspicion and grievance to travel further than facts.

What makes the RSS' approach in Bengal particularly effective is its ability to merge these elements — emotion, culture, media, and everyday interaction — into something that feels organic rather than orchestrated. Reports from the ground suggest that this mobilisation avoids public confrontation and instead relies on quiet engagement framed as cultural awareness rather than partisan campaigning, as noted in a report in *The Statesman*.

The danger of this style of politics is not immediate violence. Its deeper effect lies in how it reshapes moral expectations. When politics becomes defined primarily through identity, people begin to tolerate things they once questioned. Discrimination stops appearing shocking, and silence begins to feel prudent.

West Bengal's political culture has long valued debate and ideological contestation. The quiet campaign unfolding today challenges that tradition not by confronting it directly but by bypassing it — replacing argument with mood and persuasion with familiarity.

The coming election, then, is not only about who governs Bengal. It is also about what kind of political language becomes normal, what kind of fear becomes acceptable, and how belonging itself is quietly redefined. Democracies rarely collapse overnight; they erode when societies grow used to shrinking moral boundaries and stop recognising that this, too, is political.

(The writer is a researcher and columnist based in Delhi and Kolkata. His work explores Muslim identity, caste, and democracy in India)

China is watching the conflict not unlike the way it did during the 1991 Persian Gulf War, when the powerful display of advanced US military weaponry served as an alert to modernise the People's Liberation Army

DAVID PIERSON

A family arriving at a gathering in Tehran on March 5 to mourn the killing of Ayatollah Ali Khamenei. The sudden and furious attacks by US and Israeli forces on Iran this past week, including the assassination of the country's supreme leader, are confirming Xi Jinping's worldview that hard power is king. THE NEW YORK TIMES

As US embraces war, China hardens its power play

The sudden and furious attacks by US and Israeli forces on Iran this month, including the killing of the country's supreme leader, are confirming Xi Jinping's worldview that hard power is king.

For years, Xi, China's top leader, has warned his country about American military hostility and directed his generals to build a world-class army, or what he called a "Great Wall of Steel," strong enough to deter the United States and ensure peace on Beijing's terms.

"It is necessary to speak to invaders in the language they know," Xi once said. "That is, a war must be fought to deter invasion, and a victory is needed to win peace and respect."

Xi's more than decade-long pursuit of the power to fight fire with fire is now given added urgency because of US President Donald Trump's unapologetic use of military force, which is threatening governments and disrupting a global order that China increasingly sees itself as eventually leading.

While Xi and Trump are set to meet in several weeks in Beijing to extend a fragile truce after a punishing trade war last year, the spectre of brute American force taking down sovereign leaders like Iran's Ayatollah Ali Khamenei and capturing others like President Nicolás Maduro of Venezuela remains unsettling for China. Both Khamenei and Maduro were strategic partners to Beijing.

Chinese analysts and officials do not believe the United States would target Xi in the same way, given China's status as a nuclear power. But Trump's embrace of war as a tool to assert American dominance has nonetheless reaffirmed Beijing's view that the United States remains China's most enduring threat.

One influential Chinese political scientist, Zheng Yongnian at the Chinese University of Hong Kong's campus in Shenzhen, highlighted perceptions in China that the United States was using Israel as a springboard to go to war with Iran. As such, he said, China must prevent geopolitical rivals like Japan and the Philippines — both treaty allies of the United States — from becoming the "Israel of East Asia" and the "Israel of Southeast Asia."

"We must avoid these nations being led by the nose by the United States to achieve their own objectives," Zheng told *The Beijing News*.

Other analysts, like Shen Dingli, an international relations expert based in Shanghai, said the demonstration of American military might was forcing China to take a "sober look at the balance of power."

"Beijing now sees more clearly the extent of American capabilities," Shen said.

China is watching the conflict not unlike the way it did during the 1991 Persian Gulf War, when the powerful display of advanced US military weaponry served as an alert to modernise the People's Liberation Army.

Already, China's military posted a graphic on social media this month listing five lessons from the US-Israeli strikes on Iran. Among them were the importance of "superior firepower," echoing Xi's mantra. It also listed the need for "self-reliance," most likely a reference to China's bid to reduce its dependence on other countries for critical inputs like energy and defence production.

Top of the list, however, was that China must guard against "the enemy within," an apparent catch-all to describe Beijing's long-standing fear of foreign spying and any efforts to foment "colour revolutions" to overthrow the government. Xi has built a ruthless security apparatus to guard against such threats, which can be real: Last month, the CIA released a new video aimed at recruiting spies within China's military, hoping to exploit a sweeping anti-corruption campaign by Xi that has purged numerous senior commanders.

One of the broadest takeaways being discussed in China is to not be lulled into a false sense of security by entering negotiations with Washington. That the first US and Israeli bombs fell on Iran when the parties were still supposed to be in talks struck Beijing as duplicitous and an abuse of American power.

"The decision to strike while talks were underway conveys a disturbing precedent: Diplomacy is not a forum for sovereign equals but an instrument subject to the whims of the dominant power," read an editorial in Chinese state media.

Under the Trump administration, Chinese analysts say, the United States has become more unpredictable and more dangerous, forcing China to be increasingly vigilant.

"The strategic takeaway for China is pretty simple," said Song Zhongping, a former Chinese military officer who is now an independent commentator. "Don't assume your adversaries will play by the rules. They may strike without warning, and they may do whatever it takes, ignoring both the rules of the game and the rules of war."

That has implications for how Beijing assesses Washington's sincerity at a time when Trump has signalled that he wants to be less confrontational with China. His administration recently delayed announcing a package of arms sales to Taiwan, the self-governed island claimed by Beijing. While that might appear like an olive branch, analysts said Xi would most likely remain sceptical and undeterred from his military buildup.

"From Beijing's perspective, the United States may frame its actions as a pursuit of peace, but what it really offers is peace through domination or containment," said Kirsten Asdal, who leads the China-focused consultancy firm Asdal Advisory Group. "Xi doesn't want that for China. He wants peace through Chinese victory."

To accomplish that, Xi has already created one of the world's most formidable militaries, one buoyed by a giant navy and advanced weapons like stealth drones and hypersonic missiles that are designed to thwart US attempts to come to Taiwan's defence if China decides to invade.

China's chokehold on the mining and processing of critical minerals used to manufacture a spectrum of modern technologies, from cellphones to precision-guided missiles, has also supercharged Beijing's leverage in the world, getting Trump to back down on his tariffs.

And on Thursday, China's national legislature released the country's next five-year plan, which included pouring resources into artificial intelligence, quantum computing and other strategic technologies to further resist US pressure.

Those efforts underscore the view in China that Xi and Trump speak the same language when it comes to valuing hard power, but that their means of achieving and wielding it are vastly different.

Beijing has used US military actions as a way to cast itself by contrast as a peaceful nation that champions global stability — despite ample evidence to the contrary, such as China's aggressive military behaviour in the Taiwan Strait and the South China Sea.

For China, "strength is for self-defence and stability, not expansion," said Wang Dong, executive director of the Institute for Global Cooperation and Understanding at Peking University.

When the United States seeks strength, he continued, it does so with "disproportionate raw hard power" that ultimately cannot guarantee any of its goals, such as the emergence of a friendly and peaceful government in Iran.

"What we are witnessing," Wang said, "is the last-ditch efforts of a fading US-led order." Eastern analysts are more sceptical about China's professed modesty, saying Beijing, too, is likely to decide that it needs a larger military presence overseas and will risk becoming engaged in foreign entanglements.

"China," said Jude Blanchette, director of the Rand China Research Centre, "will feel the same tractor beam that pulls all great powers toward building capabilities that can reach further from home."

The New York Times

From deep science to deep tech

KRISHNA RAGHAV CHATURVEDI, FAMIDA KHAN AND KASTURI MANDAL

As countries race to secure technological leadership in a rapidly transforming global economy, two terms dominate policy speeches, funding calls and startup pitches: 'deep science' and 'deep tech'. From India's Rs 1 lakh crore RDI fund to DPIIT's deep tech startup recognition, both phrases signal ambition. Yet they are often used interchangeably and rarely defined with precision.

For India, this is not a semantic issue but a strategic one. The country has a strong publicly funded research base, but translation into globally competitive technologies remains limited. Without conceptual clarity, funding priorities blur, incentives misalign, and expectations collide.

'Deep science' refers to fundamental, curiosity-driven research that advances knowledge frontiers in fields such as physics, chemistry, biology, materials science, and mathematics. It is marked by long time horizons, high uncertainty, and no immediate commerciality.

Historically, transformative technologies have sprung from such work. Thermodynamics enabled the steam engine. Semiconductor physics led to modern computing. Molecular biology underpins biotechnology. What is "deep" today may become standard tomorrow.

Deep science produces potential, not products. Its outcomes are unpredictable and often realised decades later. Applying short-term performance metrics or forcing early commercialisation risks distorting incentives and discouraging risk-taking.

Deep tech represents the commercialisation of scientifically deep breakthroughs into disruptive technologies. It is typically IP-intensive, R&D-heavy, and protected by high technical barriers. Examples include advanced diagnostics, clean energy systems, autonomous platforms, quantum computing, and next-generation manufacturing.

Recently, the INSA Policy Centre (CSTIP), CSIR–NIScPR, and the American Chemical Society brought together scientists, startup founders, policymakers, investors, and international stakeholders for a workshop to address confusion between deep science and deep tech. Clear definitions, participants argued, allow policymakers to fund curiosity-driven research without premature market pressure.

Led by Prof Ashutosh Sharma (INSA president), Geetha Vani Rayasam (CSIR–NIScPR director), Akhilesh Gupta (senior consultant, INSA), Brajesh Pandey (INSA, ED), and Deeksha Gupta (ACS director), discussions converged on a blunt assessment: India does not lack scientific capability.

It lacks a robust system to convert deep scientific knowledge into scalable, market-validated technologies. At the core of this gap lies a need to distinguish clearly between deep science and deep tech.

Participants cautioned against a "translate or perish" culture. While translation is vital, rushing foundational science can compromise quality and long-term impact.

A key insight from the workshop was asymmetry: deep tech often emerges from deep science but not always.

However, deep science does not originate from deep tech. And not all technology qualifies as deep tech. Incremental improvements, cost optimisations, or simple digitisation, however valuable, are not disruptive in the same sense. Recognising this distinction helps prevent the dilution of the term "deep" and ensures that truly transformative innovations receive appropriate support.

Even when strong science exists, translation often falters. Many promising ideas stall in the so-called "valley of death", not because the research is weak but because the ecosystem for lab-to-market transition is underdeveloped. Beyond technology readiness levels (TRLs), participants highlighted three critical dimensions:

- Communication readiness: the ability to explain value to investors, regulators, and customers.
- Manufacturing readiness: scalable production with quality and cost control.
- Market readiness: validated demand, regulatory acceptance, and adoption pathways.

Despite years of dialogue, academia–industry integration remains limited. Public research institutions often operate separately from market realities. Embedded technology transfer officers are scarce, incentives for researchers to commercialise are weak, and IP frameworks can create uncertainty for private partners.

Global innovation leaders have built deliberate systems. In the United States, universities and national laboratories anchor deep tech ecosystems and support spinouts. Europe aligns deep science with societal missions. Australia has streamlined industry collaboration and IP governance. For India, the path forward requires a clear classification framework. Not all science must become deep tech. Nor should every new technology be labelled "deep". The real challenge is identifying which scientific advances are ready for translation and building systems that enable that journey.

(Krishna is with the American Chemical Society; Famida works at the INSA, and Kasturi with CSIR-NIScPR)

OUR PAGES OF HISTORY

50 YEARS AGO: MARCH 1976

New oil source found off West Coast

New Delhi, March 8
Announcing in Parliament the discovery of oil of "very great significance" at the Bassein structure off the Western Coast, Petroleum Minister K. D. Malaviya, said today a 71-metre thick limestone section containing oil and gas has been encountered after drilling about 1,714 metres. The preliminary testing could only be of a short duration but, "it indicated good production characteristics." A more precise estimate could be had after the well was drilled to the projected 2,300-metre depth.

25 YEARS AGO: MARCH 2001

Mysugar scam report: State turns a Nelson's eye

Bangalore, March 8
The State Government seems to have turned a Nelson's eye on the Mysugar liquor scam, running into nearly Rs 12 crore, by putting the issue on the back burner. Though a high-level probe by a committee comprising three excise joint commissioners had pointed out several discrepancies, and misappropriation in the transactions of Mysore Sugar Company Limited's (Mandya) arrack sacheting unit and distillery, the State Government preferred to sit on the report.

OASIS | GEORGE NETTO

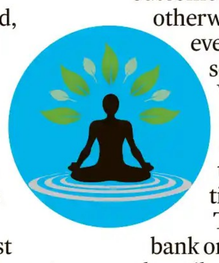
Hope springs eternal

Arguably, no emotion or attribute is so commonly shared by humans as hope. It impinges on our lives almost every day in one way or the other, keeping alive the universal expectation, namely "Hopefully, everything will work out well."

Hope, undying hope, sustains us in our darkest days of adversity. We tenaciously cling to it no matter how hopeless the situation may be. Indeed, hoping against hope, as a last resort we often even will things to turn out favourably. And sometimes they do – it is, of course, nothing short of divine intervention.

Experience, of course, teaches us that when hope is tempered with realism, our sense of disappointment or loss is not so acute when things do not turn out as expected.

As a poet rightly observed, hope springs eternal in the human breast. No matter how much (or how fast) hope recedes, sheer desperation and intuition impel us never to abandon it altogether even if there is only a flicker left.



And so we clutch at its last vestiges even as it slowly slips out of our grasp, leaving us totally devoid of it and consigning us to our God-given fate.

Hope is our first and last resort whenever we are anxious about the outcome of anything – personal or otherwise. Indeed, willy-nilly, everything we undertake in life somehow hinges on hope. We sincerely hope for the best to happen but meekly resign ourselves to accepting the worst if that is predestined by the Almighty.

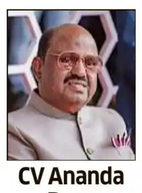
The optimist may stoutly bank on hope and the pessimist may gloomily turn to fatalism. However, in a desperate situation it is only the potent power of prayer reinforced with hope that can bail us out.

Hope lies at the core of every human's heart. It is our last resort when all else fails besides being an age-old legacy that we pass on from generation to generation. Indeed, as long as the human race survives, so will hope – along with the fond and wistful belief that wars will end, universal peace and brotherhood will prevail and better sense will guide our world leaders.

All said and done, hope (like air) is one of life's vital essentials to keep us buoyant and prevent us from slipping into the depths of despondency in a crisis.

Resignation as Bengal Guv conscious decision: Bose

KOLKATA, PTI: CV Ananda Bose on Sunday said his resignation as West Bengal governor was a "conscious decision" and asserted that the reasons for his exit will remain confidential till the right time comes.



CV Ananda Bose

Speaking to reporters at the Kolkata airport, Bose said he would return to Bengal to cast his vote.

Bose, a native of Kerala, had shifted his voting base to Bengal barely a week before tendering resignation from his office.

"I took a conscious decision to put in my papers, the reasons of which will remain confidential till the right time arrives," Bose said.

"The rules of this game include knowing when it ends," he added.

Asked to comment on the angst expressed by President Droupadi Murmu on alleged protocol violations and tribal deprivation in the state, Bose avoided a direct response.

"The President is very experienced, balanced and an extremely dignified person. She must have had her reasons for saying what she said. But I am no one to comment on what the President said," Bose added.

B'desh activist killing: 2 arrested in Bengal's border district

KOLKATA, PTI: Two persons accused of killing Osman Hadi, a political activist of Bangladesh whose daylight murder had sparked widespread violence in the neighbouring country, were arrested by the special task force (STF) of the West Bengal police, an official said on Sunday.

The two Bangladesh nationals, identified as Rahul alias Faisal Karim Masud (37) and Alamgir Hossain (34), residents of Patuakhali and Dhaka, respectively, were apprehended from the border town of Bongaon in North 24 Parganas district.

They were arrested on the intervening night of March 7 and 8, the Bengal STF said.

It said that there was credible information that two Bangladeshi nationals after committing serious crimes had fled and illegally entered India. "They were trying to take shelter in the border area of Bongaon with the intention of crossing back into Bangladesh when the opportunity arises," it said in a statement.

Session resumes today; Speaker removal motion to set tone

Oppn to corner govt on Iran, Epstein files, US trade deal

SHEMIN JOY
NEW DELHI, DHNS

The Budget Session of Parliament will resume on Monday with an Opposition-sponsored resolution seeking the removal of Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla to be taken up on the very first day. Non-NDA parties are also sharpening their arsenal to corner the Narendra Modi government on issues such as Iran, the Epstein files and the Indo-US trade deal.

The second leg of the session, which runs until April 2, is expected to be marked by heightened animosity, with the ruling BJP likely to use the parliamentary platform to target the Opposition, particularly against the backdrop of upcoming elections in Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Puducherry, Assam and West Bengal, whose schedules will be announced in the coming days.

The BJP has indicated that it will not miss the opportunity to use the episode involving President Droupadi Murmu's programme in West Bengal, a move that the Trinamool Congress is expected to counter.

The party also plans to continue targeting the Congress, particularly Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha, Rahul Gandhi.

Meanwhile, the Opposition—whose floor managers are set to meet on Monday morning to fine-tune strategy—believes it has ample ammunition in the Modi government's handling of the West Asia situation, the Epstein files and the Indo-US trade deal. It is unlikely to ease pressure on Prime Minister Modi.

The Opposition plans to highlight Modi's visit to Israel just before the US-Israel joint strike on Iran, the delay in condemning the assassination of Iranian Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei and the hike in domestic LPG prices linked to the West Asia situation.

The major flashpoint in the second leg of the session will be the unprecedented resolution seeking the removal of Speaker Om Birla. The motion accuses him of preventing Rahul and other Opposition leaders from speaking, suspending MPs, alleging that women MPs planned to attack Modi, and echoing the government's stance on "controversial" matters.

With the numbers stacked against the Opposition, the fate of the resolution is a foregone conclusion.

However, they believe it will send a strong message that the Opposition is being undermined in Parliament, while also showcasing unity among non-NDA parties, especially with the initially reluctant Trinamool Congress joining hands.

Modi has set the tone for the debate, saying that Birla had taken all parliamentarians along and was committed to the principles of the Constitution and parliamentary democracy.

Birla has recused himself from chairing the proceedings since the notice was submitted on February 10, during the first leg of the session that ended on February 13.

The second leg would see both Houses discussing the Demands for Grants for six to eight ministries before passing the Budget.

It is also likely to bring a "crucial" bill during the remainder of the session, as Parliamentary Affairs Minister Kiren Rijiju indicated last month.

WHAT TO EXPECT

- Unprecedented motion against Speaker Om Birla
- Oppn to highlight Modi's Israel visit, LPG price hike, delayed Iran response
- BJP to counter with Murmu programme row, target Rahul
- Houses to debate Demands for Grants, budget passage, and a crucial bill

Congress to seek debate on West Asia conflict

NEW DELHI, DHNS

Congress will demand a discussion on the developments in West Asia following the US-Israel attack on Iran and India's foreign policy "deviations" during the second leg of Parliament's Budget Session starting Monday, even as the government indicated to the Opposition that External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar will make a statement on the issue.

It will also demand a debate on the impact of the Indo-US interim trade deal on farmers in the session, which will end on April 2.

The decision was taken at a meeting of the Congress Parliamentary Strategy Group, chaired by top leader Sonia Gandhi at her residence and attended by party chief Mallikarjun Kharge, Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi and others.

Congress General Secretary (Communications) and Rajya Sabha Chief Whip Jairam Ramesh said it has been "let known" that Jaishankar will make a statement in both Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha on the West Asia situation.

He said the problem with such Ministerial statements is that they "convey little of value over and above that is already known and more importantly, MPs are not given an opportunity to seek clarifications or ask questions".

"What the Opposition wants is a full-fledged debate. On April 8, 2003, there was a spirited debate in the Lok Sabha on the US invasion of Iraq, and a resolution was even passed condemning it. This was when. Atal Bihari Vajpayee, who knew his 'raj dharma', was the PM," he said.

After the meeting, Congress Rajya Sabha Whip and Working Committee member Syed Naseer Hussain told reporters that the meeting discussed national and international issues and decided on issues to be taken on priority.

"We discussed the developments in West Asia, the crisis there and India's foreign policy, as also its impact on international trade and energy. We also discussed the impact of the Indo-US interim trade deal on farmers," he said.

He said the party wants a discussion on both issues during the session.

J&K statehood

The meeting also deliberated on the delay in granting statehood to Jammu and Kashmir, the demands raised by people in Ladakh and the green signal for development projects in ecologically sensitive Andaman and Nicobar Islands by the National Green Tribunal (NGT).

The party also wants to raise urban governance issues with a focus on Indore and Ahmedabad, where public health issues grabbed headlines.

Hussain also said the entire Opposition will participate in the debate on the resolution seeking the removal of Om Birla as Lok Sabha Speaker.

Speaker's removal: Rules, numbers & precedents

Removal of Speaker: Articles 94(c) & 96

- Article 94(c): Speaker can be removed by Lok Sabha resolution passed by majority of all MPs
- 14-day notice required before moving resolution
- Lok Sabha currently has 541 MPs, with 2 vacancies

Article 96: What Speaker does when resolution comes to House

- Can be present in House but cannot preside during debate
- Can speak and vote, but no casting vote in case of tie

Notice Against Om Birla

- Submitted on February 10, signed by 119 MPs (12 parties)
- TMC not signatory, but will vote against Birla

NDA	I.N.D.I.A bloc	AAP MPs support
293 MPs	232	3

- With 8 suspended, Opposition strength: 227
- 9 MPs (YSRCP, ASP, AIMIM, VOTTP, ZPM, Akalis) not aligned to NDA or I.N.D.I.A

Whip : BJP & Congress issue whip for full attendance

Past No-Trust Moves

- 1954 : GV Mavlankar – defeated
- 1966 : Hukkam Singh – motion not admitted (lacked support of 50 MPs)
- 1987 : Balram Jakhar – defeated

In Rajya Sabha

2020 Notice against Dy Chairman Harivansh - Rejected

2024 Notice against VP Jagdeep Dhankhar - Rejected

Azad, Moily to appear before 'one poll' panel

NEW DELHI, DHNS: Senior leaders Ghulam Nabi Azad and M Veerappa Moily will appear before a Parliamentary panel examining the 'One Nation One Election' (ONOE) Bill on Monday.

This will be the 17th meeting of the Joint Committee of the Parliament, headed by senior BJP MP PP Chaudhary. The multi-party panel is examining the Constitution (129th Amendment) Bill, 2024 and the Union Territories Laws (Amendment) Bill, 2024, providing for simultaneous polls.

Azad, a former Congress leader who floated his own party Democratic Progressive Azad Party, and senior Congress leader Moily will give their opinion on the contentious proposal at the meeting scheduled for 3 pm on Monday.

Politicians, jurists, political scientists, constitutional experts and economists have appeared before the panel in the previous meetings. Earlier, senior MPs Abhishek Manu Singhvi and Kapil Sibal appeared before the panel.

Former Chief Justices BR Gavai, Sanjiv Khanna, DY Chandrachud, UU Lalit, and JS Khehar have also appeared before the panel. Officials of the Ministry of Law and Justice and Law Commission functionaries have also provided their inputs.

The Lok Sabha extended the tenure of the ONOE panel several times.

Mamata turns tables on Modi in Murmu row

Displays photo to charge BJP with insulting President

ANIRBAN BHAUMIK
KOLKATA, DHNS

The war of words between the Trinamool Congress (TMC) and the BJP over President Droupadi Murmu's visit to West Bengal escalated, with Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Sunday citing an old picture to turn the tables on Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

Modi continued his attack on the TMC for the second consecutive day on the Bengal government's alleged insult of Murmu during her visit to the state on Saturday.

He called the TMC "arrogant" and accused it and the government of insulting a woman tribal leader holding the office of the President.

Mamata, however, displayed a March 31, 2024, picture to allege that Modi himself had insulted Murmu by remaining seated even when the President had stood up to confer the Bharat Ratna on BJP veteran L K Advani.

"It is the BJP which has the tradition of insulting the President, not us," she said, displaying the picture from the podium at the site of her sit-in protest in Kolkata against the Election Commission over the SIR) of electoral rolls in West Bengal.

On Saturday, Murmu expressed displeasure over the shifting of the venue of a tribal community event she attended in West Bengal. She called Mamata her "younger sister", but expressed displeasure over the absence of the CM or any other state minister during her visit to the International Santhal Conference at Gosaipur near the airport in Bagdogra in North Bengal. The event was originally scheduled to be held at Bidhannagar in Darjeeling.

NARENDRA MODI
Prime Minister

"Today, as the nation celebrates International Women's Day, it is deeply concerning that just yesterday, the TMC government in West Bengal demonstrated a grave insult towards the honourable President of India, Draupadi Murmu.

Private organisers

Mamata, meanwhile, maintained that the state government had been unaware of the details of the President's programme, and that the private organisers had not taken it into confidence.

She said the responsibility for the garbage allegedly strewn along the road to the event venue, the greenroom malfunction, and the lack of water in the toilets should fall on the event managers and the Airport Authority of India, which had given its land for the event. "We did not pick the venue, you did," said the CM.

Black flags greet EC in Kolkata amid voter roll row

KOLKATA, DHNS: Protesters waved black flags and shouted "go back" slogans as the Election Commission arrived in Kolkata on Sunday to assess poll preparations in West Bengal, amid uncertainty over the fate of more than 50 lakh voters placed in the "under adjudication" category after the Special Intensive Revision of the electoral rolls.

Chief Election Commissioner Gyanesh Kumar, along with Election Commissioners Sukhbir Singh Sandhu and Vivek Joshi and senior officials, will meet representatives of the state's political parties in Kolkata on Monday.

The EC has already visited poll-bound Assam, Tamil Nadu, Kerala and Puducherry, with West Bengal being its final stop before announcing the schedules for the Assembly elections in the four states and one Union Territory, expected by mid-March.

The EC's visit comes at a time when the ruling Trinamool Congress has sharpened its attack over the SIR. Hours before the CEC and the two other commissioners landed in Kolkata, Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee dubbed the poll panel the "vanish commission" and accused the BJP of misusing it to erase legitimate voters from the rolls.

As many as 63.66 lakh voters—around 8.3% of the electorate—have been struck off since the revision exercise, reducing the voter base from about 7.66 crore to just over 7.04 crore. More than 60 lakh voters are placed in the "under adjudication" category. Their eligibility is now being determined through legal scrutiny by over 500 judicial officers, under the supervision of the HC and apex court.

Assam polls: Cong, Raijor Dal alliance talks collapse

SUMIR KARMAKAR
GUWAHATI, DHNS

Akhil Gogoi

Gaurav Gogoi

The Opposition camp in Assam is apparently headed towards a setback ahead of next month's Assembly elections, with the Raijor Dal, a regional party headed by MLA Akhil Gogoi, on Sunday announcing that seat-sharing talks with the Congress had collapsed.

The party, which had joined a proposed alliance of six Opposition outfits in November last year, claimed the alliance ended due to the Congress' reluctance to give it the Dhing seat, a Muslim-majority constituency in Central Assam.

It blamed Congress state chief Gaurav Gogoi and Lok Sabha MP Rakibul Hussain's "arrogance" for the collapse.

The Raijor Dal had initially sought 27 seats (out of the total 126), but scaled down its demand to 15. However, the Congress on February 19 offered 13 seats that included only four seats from the list of its preferred constituencies.

"They offered us friendly fights in another five seats and four as preferred by them. But we requested the Dhing seat. The AICC and a few other leaders in Assam were in favour of giving us Dhing. However, Gaurav and Rakibul were against it. The Congress wanted us to surrender, but we refused to bow down," said Raijor Dal spokespersons Debanga Saurav Gogoi and Pranab Deka on Sunday.

"We proposed a Common Minimum Programme of the Opposition parties, but Gaurav rejected our proposal and broke the alliance," they added.

AIUDF's Aminul Islam, which is also not a part of the Opposition alliance, currently represents Dhing.

The statement came two days after Congress and three allies — the Asom Jatiya Parishad, the CPM, and the All Party Hill Leaders Conference — announced an alliance.

A similar proposed alliance between the Congress and the Raijor Dal did not materialise before the 2021 polls and the bypolls for five Assembly seats in 2024. Formed soon after the anti-CAA agitation in 2020, the Raijor Dal contested the 2021 elections in alliance with the AJP.

Assam govt to give Rs 9k each to 40L women ahead of polls

GUWAHATI, DHNS

Orunodoi is a flagship poverty alleviation scheme of the current government, under which eligible women beneficiaries receive Rs 1,250 per month.

With the Assembly elections just a few weeks away, the BJP-led government in Assam has decided to transfer Rs 9,000 each to 40 lakh women beneficiaries of its flagship Orunodoi scheme on March 10, a move the Opposition parties have described as "enticement" to influence women voters.

Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Sunday announced that Rs 3,600 crore would be transferred to the bank accounts of women beneficiaries in a single day on March 10, which would also be a "history for Assam".

Sarma had announced in January that Rs 8,000 would be transferred to the beneficiaries of the scheme on February 20. However, the move was postponed.

'Rongali Bihu gift'

This included monthly financial assistance of Rs 1,250 for four months, January to April, while an additional Rs 3,000 was announced as a "Rongali Bihu gift".

Sarma on Sunday said the additional amount was enhanced from Rs 3,000 to Rs 4,000, taking the total to Rs 9,000.

Sarma said the money would be disbursed during formal functions, which would be organised at the panchayat level as well as at the village council level in districts under autonomous councils.

The Congress in the Opposition, however, asked why the Sarma government decided to transfer the money just ahead of the elections. The party said the BJP was offering "enticement" to woo women voters.

The Orunodoi scheme was launched in 2020, months ahead of the 2021 Assam Assembly elections.

Initially, Rs 830 was given every month. The amount was later enhanced to Rs 1,000 and then to Rs 1,250.

Rs 350-crore aid for 3.5L conflict-hit women in Manipur

GUWAHATI, DHNS: Manipur Chief Minister Yumnam Khemchand Singh on Sunday announced that Rs 350 crore was being earmarked to provide assistance to 3.5 lakh women impacted due to the ongoing conflict involving the Meitei and Kuki communities.

Singh, who assumed the charge as the CM on February 4, made the announcement while taking part in the International Women's Day celebrations in Imphal.

Lauding the courage of Manipuri women, Singh stated that they had played crucial roles in the state's economy and political issues in different phases of its history.

"A widow in Manipur can nurture and mend their child to become a successful person even by selling vegetables and engaging in handloom works," he said.

Singh said his government was also taking steps to ensure that those displaced by the conflict could go back to their homes.

More than 260 people have died, and over 60,000 displaced due to the conflict since May 2023. Women inmates living in several relief camps have been demanding that the authorities facilitate their return to their homes.

Nitish's son Nishant joins JD(U)

ABHAY KUMAR
PATNA

Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar greets his son Nishant Kumar as he joins the JD(U), in Patna, on Sunday. PTI

In what could be seen as the beginning of a new era in Bihar's political landscape, Nishant Kumar, son of Chief Minister Nitish Kumar, on Sunday formally joined the ruling Janata Dal (United).

The move is being seen as the first step towards his elevation to deputy chief minister in the new dispensation, which will be headed by a BJP leader once Nitish relinquishes the CM's post next month.

Nitish, who throughout his career and often criticised leaders for promoting family members, appears to have yielded to his supporters' demands to bring Nishant into the party.

'Personal decision'

"I will take utmost care of the party in the absence of my father, Nitish Kumar, who has decided to move to the Rajya Sabha. It was his personal decision to become a member of the Upper House in Parliament. We all accept it and stand by him. He will, however, continue to guide us, and we will try to strengthen the party and win the trust of the people," Nishant said in his first public address after joining JD(U).

The 51-year-old studied in Patna and Mussoorie before completing his BTech from Birla Institute of Technology (BIT) at Mesra, Ranchi.

A soft-spoken Nishant had largely stayed away from active politics, barring a few occasions when he praised his father for "putting Bihar on the fast track of development and ensuring the rule of law in a state notorious for its lawlessness".

Political abduction

Meanwhile, the Opposition RJD has termed Nitish's shift to Rajya Sabha "political abduction", drawing parallels with the US capture of Venezuelan President Nicholas Maduro. "What happened with Maduro in Venezuela has happened in Bihar too. A CM moving to the Rajya Sabha is pure political abduction. Voters of Bihar feel betrayed," said RJD MP Manoj Jha.

Govt sets up 17-member panel for reforms in SEZ policy

NEW DELHI, PTI: The government has set up a 17-member committee to suggest larger reforms in the policy for special economic zones (SEZs), an official said.

It will submit a concept paper recommending a roadmap for broad-based and comprehensive reforms to formulate a SEZ 2.0 policy.

It will undertake a background study focused on the harmonisation of various prevalent export promotion schemes, including SEZs, export-oriented units (EoUs), MOOWR (Manufacturing and Other Operations in Warehouse), Advance Authorisation, EPCG (export promotion for capital goods), and Duty Free Import Authorisation (DFIA).

The committee's composition includes representatives from commerce, customs, Niti Aayog, DPIIT, and CBIC.

It will also assess the effectiveness of SEZs in attracting investment, promoting manufacturing generation, services, technology up-gradation, and employment, including for MSMEs.

Govt monitoring flight operations, fares amid West Asia disruptions

Indian airlines plan additional services to bring back stranded travellers

NEW DELHI, PTI

Indian airlines cancelled 279 international flights on Sunday due to the West Asia conflict, while the Civil Aviation Ministry said it is closely monitoring the situation.

The airlines plan to operate 50 flights from the region on Monday, the ministry said and added it was also closely monitoring airfares to ensure that there was no undue surge in the ticket prices.

The escalating conflict in West Asia involving the US, Israel and Iran has significantly disrupted flight operations due to airspace closures and restrictions.

The ministry on Sunday said that due to the ongoing situation in the Gulf, flight operations have been impacted across several sectors.

"A total of 49 flight operations were scheduled today by Indian domestic carriers from West Asia to India. As on 8 March, 279 flights scheduled to be operated today by Indian domestic carriers have been cancelled," the ministry said in a post on X.

The 49 flights had been scheduled from various cities in the Middle East, including Dubai, Abu Dhabi, Ras Al Khaimah, Fujairah, Muscat and Jeddah subject to operational feasibility.

"Passenger movement data for 7th March, 2026 shows that a total of 51 inbound flights operated by Indian carriers arrived in India from the region carrying 8,175 passengers," the ministry said in a statement.

An official said a total of 66 flights, including 34 departures and 32 arrivals, were cancelled at the Mumbai airport on Sunday.

Delhi airport operator DIAL said that due to the current geopolitical developments in the Middle East, some west-bound international flights may experience delays or schedule changes.

On Monday, Air India and Air India Express will operate 10 flights to and from Jeddah, while Air India Express will operate 14 flights to and from Muscat.

In addition, Air India and Air India Express will operate a total of 32 ad-hoc non-scheduled flights to the UAE on Monday to assist in bringing stranded travellers back to India, subject to the availability of slots and other prevailing conditions at the respective point of departure at the time, Air India said in a statement.

According to the ministry's statement, it was in constant coordination with airlines and other stakeholders. "Airfares are also being closely monitored to ensure that ticket prices remain reasonable and that there is no undue surge during this period," it added.

DG Shipping highlights safety gap on oil tanker

NEW DELHI, DHNS: The Directorate General of Shipping (DGS) under the Union Ministry of Ports and Shipping has issued an advisory noting safety shortcomings on the oil tanker MV Skylight following a deadly attack amid the escalating Iran-Israel conflict.

On March 1, the Palau-flagged vessel was struck — reportedly by an Iranian projectile or missile — approximately five nautical miles north of the Khasab Port in Oman's Musandam Governorate, near the strategically vital Strait of Hormuz.

The attack triggered a severe fire that engulfed the accommodation block, trapping several crew members. Two Indian seafarers died in the incident.

It urged ships to maintain 24x7 vigilance, promptly report any suspicious activities (such as drone sightings or unidentified vessels), and establish round-the-clock emergency communication.

"Masters and crew members are requested to ensure that a round-the-clock watch is maintained all around the vessel and in its vicinity in accordance with the provisions of the ISPS Code. Any suspicious activity or security concern should be reported immediately through the established reporting channels to ensure a timely response," said the advisory.

ED to challenge interim bail granted to Al Falah chairman

NEW DELHI, PTI

The Enforcement Directorate is expected to challenge the interim bail granted by a local court to Al Falah University group chairman Jawad Ahmed Siddiqui, stating he can influence the probe as "more aspects" of the case are still under investigation, officials said.

A court in Delhi granted two-week interim bail to Siddiqui (61) on Saturday in a money laundering case linked to the alleged generation of illicit funds from the fees paid by students of his Faridabad-based educational institution by allegedly misrepresenting the accreditation and recognition of his colleges.

The ED arrested him in November 2025, and he is lodged in jail under judicial custody.

The money laundering case against Siddiqui and the varsity stems from two Delhi Police FIRs pertaining to alleged fraud with the students.

Siddiqui had applied for the interim bail to support and take care of his wife, who is suffering from stage 4 cancer and is slated to undergo a chemotherapy session scheduled on March 12.

ED officials said that the agency will challenge the local court's order before the Delhi High Court soon, stating that its submissions made before the local court in order to prevent the grant of interim bail to Siddiqui were "not considered seriously" and that there was another FIR filed against him under the Unlawful Activities Prevention Act (UAPA) linked to the Red Fort area blast of November 10 last year.

It is also expected to inform the HC about the charges made against him in the ED chargesheet that three doctors, two arrested by the NIA and the third an alleged suicide bomber of the Red Fort area blast, apart from other specialists, were appointed to the Al Falah medical college without any police verification or scrutiny.

World's tallest national flagpole proposed at Haji Ali Dargah in Mumbai

MRITYUNJAY BOSE
MUMBAI, DHNS

The Haji Ali Dargah in Mumbai, the resting place of Sufi saint Pir Haji Ali Shah Bukhari, is set to feature the world's tallest national flagpole, with a proposal being submitted to the Maharashtra government.

The announcement was made over the weekend, coinciding with the holy month of Ramzan. During Ramzan, the dargah hosts one of the biggest gatherings.

The 15th-century Haji Ali shrine of the Sufi saint is located on rocks about 500 yards from the shoreline of Worli in the middle of the Arabian Sea.

"The Haji Ali Dargah has a very important place in the history of India. This small islet will now have the world's tallest national flag," said Sushail Khandwani, trustee of the Haji Ali Dargah and the Mahim Makhdoom Shah Baba Dargah.

Landmark symbol

According to him, the Haji Ali Dargah Trust has submitted a proposal to the Maharashtra government to erect the world's tallest national flag on the islet adjoining the shrine. The installation is envisioned as a landmark symbol of patriotism, unity, and the shared identity of the nation," he said, adding that special piling and quality metal would be used for the flagpole and special fabric for the flag.

"We have to take into account that it is located along the sea," he added.

A special Sehri was organised at the dargah, in which priests of different faiths, including Hindus, Muslims, Christians, Parsees, Sikhs, and Buddhists, were present.

Among those present were Shiv Sena (UBT) MP Anil Desai, Samajwadi Party MLA Abu Asim Azmi, Congress MLAs Amin Patel and Aslam Shaikh, Shiv Sena MLA Manoj Jamsutkar, former AIMIM MLA Waris Pathan, Municipal Commissioner Bhushan Gagrani, and educationalist Zahir Kazi.

MISCELLANY

◆ COMICS ◆

Blondie

I'VE DECIDED NOT TO GO CRAZY SHOPPING JUST BECAUSE IT'S BLACK FRIDAY!
WHEW! GOOD!
I'M GOING TO PACE IT OUT
I'LL DO SOME SHOPPING TODAY, THEN I'LL SPEND SATURDAY AND SUNDAY MAKING LISTS FOR CYBER MONDAY AND AMAZON TUESDAY
FOLLOWED BY FLAT-BROKE WEDNESDAY!

Hagar The Horrible

HAGAR, YOU ARE THE BEST HUSBAND A WIFE COULD EVER ASK FOR!
SWEETHEART, YOU WOULD SAY THAT EVEN IF YOU DIDN'T THINK SO!
AND YOU WOULD THINK SO EVEN IF I DIDN'T SAY SO!

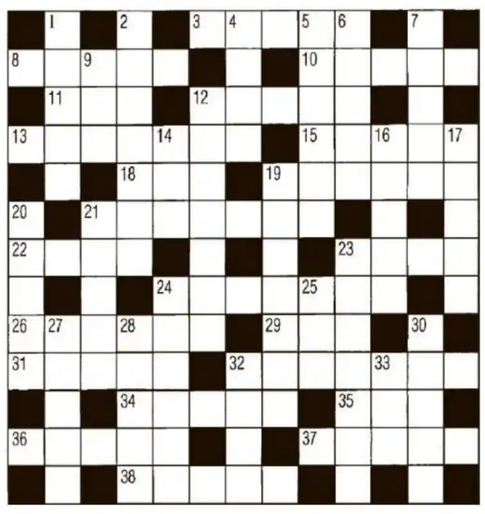
Beetle Bailey

Peanuts

EUDORA! WHAT ARE YOU DOING WITH THAT BLANKET?
THAT BLANKET BELONGS TO MY SWEET BABBOO...
I'M NOT YOUR SWEET BABBOO!!
HE GAVE IT TO ME
I DIDN'T KNOW WHAT I WAS DOING!

Marvin

CROSSWORD CHALLENGE 12369



CRYPTIC

ACROSS
3 Ruffians getting the Yanks out of breath? (5)
8 Lofty accommodation (5)
10 Given only £4, I'd be angry! (5)
11 To be the boss, you need dash! (3)
12 See a bird as a criminal (5)
13 New part of Los Angeles, where French is spoken (7)
15 Going on foot, indeed comes to a sticky end! (5)
18 State drama company? (3)
19 Live somewhere posh? (6)
21 He can order a chap to change gear (7)
22 Badly missing (4)
23 Be warm hearted and put up with things (4)
24 Being worn, can it cause a skid? (7)
26 What's the score? (6)
29 Kind of drum needing attention? (3)
31 Prophet's little house by the sea (5)
32 Maybe scared about the piano getting scratched? (7)
34 Seaman determined to get around (5)
35 Something supportive for a sportsman (3)
36 She makes a promising start with a nobleman (5)
37 Such charges may be dropped (5)
38 Hunts or looks around central Hackney (5)

DOWN
1 Scatter carelessly, it's true (5)
2 The digger has a name for it (7)
4 Have a fling? (4)
5 Frown on goods starting to be inferior (6)
6 Bill, the Dickens of a villain! (5)
7 Grazing for a group of horses? (5)
9 Vessel in which a nut gets cracked (3)
12 How to surpass in competence (7)
14 Indigent, being reduced in rank? (3)
16 Has it a regular route around the interior? (5)
17 Long to finish a story and get paid (5)
19 Regard as a wraithlike spectre (7)
20 She has complete confidence (5)
21 Social conventions further south (5)
23 Be judged and scolded (7)
24 Source of bleats and whinnies (6)
25 The usual, of course (3)
27 Have they less than two husbands between them? (5)
28 Comes close to Spithead? (5)
30 They're falsely called choppers (5)
32 Something to do with a straw (4)
33 Go and reciprocate (3)

ACROSS
3 Jumps (5)
8 Mistake (5)
10 Tree sap (5)
11 Forbid (3)
12 Skinflint (5)
13 Of the sides (7)
15 Japanese padded quilt (5)
18 Corpulence (3)
19 Distant (6)
21 School prefect (7)
22 Water jug (4)
23 Male deer (4)
24 Disfigures (7)
26 Couch (6)
29 Male cat (3)
31 Artist's stand (5)
32 Deer meat (7)
34 Naked figures (5)
35 Signal agreement (3)
36 Reddish fluid (5)
37 People from Denmark (5)
38 Rips (5)

DOWN
1 Of a town (5)
2 Dead, almost dead (4,3)
4 Heinous (4)
5 Favour (6)
6 Whey (5)
7 Flier (5)
9 Rodent (3)
12 Afternoon show (7)
14 Managed (3)
16 Sounds a horn (5)
17 Whinny (5)
19 Revolves (7)
20 Tantalise (5)
21 Thaws (5)
23 Meeting for discussion (7)
24 Mislead (6)
25 Confidence trick (3)
27 Premature (5)
28 Male voice (5)
30 Cowboy show (5)
32 Sell (4)
33 Male offspring (3)

SOLUTIONS TO CROSSWORD 2670

ACROSS: 1 Impasse, 5 Publish, 9 Scuffle, 10 Nervous, 11 Lying, 12 Third-rate, 13 Rigmarole, 15 Seedy, 16 Greed, 18 Task force, 21 In the lead, 24 Pound, 25 Monitor, 26 Madeira, 27 Retract, 28 Relieve.

DOWN: 1 Insular, 2 Pouring, 3 Safeguard, 4 Erect, 5 Penniless, 6 Bored, 7 Isolate, 8 Hosiery, 14 On the trot, 15 Soft-pedal, 16 Glimmer, 17 Extinct, 19 Routine, 20 Endgame, 22 Extra, 23 Demur.

◆SU-DO-KU-6849◆

		3	5		6		8	
5						2	1	6
		9	1	2				3
3	4	7				1	2	8
1				3	4	9		
8	3	6						2
	5		3		9	6		

hard

9	5	6	2	1	8	3	7	4
3	4	7	6	5	9	2	8	1
2	8	1	7	4	3	5	9	6
6	1	4	8	7	5	9	2	3
7	3	9	1	2	6	8	4	5
8	2	5	9	3	4	1	6	7
1	7	3	4	8	2	6	5	9
4	6	8	5	9	1	7	3	2
5	9	2	3	6	7	4	1	8

SOLUTION TO 6848

To solve the puzzle: To solve a su-do-ku puzzle, every digit from1 to 9 must appear in each of the nine vertical columns, in each of the nine horizontal rows, and in each of the nine boxes.

SCRABBLE™

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							Triple Word Score	RACK 1
D2	T1	X8	U1	E1	E1	R1		
								RACK 2
A1	Y4	G2	S1	A1	R1	A1		
								RACK 3
O1	Y4	I1	I1	P3	L1	T1		
								RACK 4
C3	P3	E1	I1	A1	P3	R1	Double Word Score	

PAR SCORE 125-135
by JUDD

FOUR RACK TOTAL
TIME LIMIT: 20 MIN

DIRECTIONS: Make a 2- to 7-letter word from the letters in each row. Add points of each word, using scoring directions at right. 7-letter words get 50-point bonus. "Blanks" used as any letter have no point value. All Judd's words are in the Collins English Dictionary. JUDD'S SOLUTION TOMORROW

SATURDAY'S SOLUTION

M3 A1 R1 M3 I1 T1 E1	RACK 1 =	72
J8 A1 S1 P3 E1 R1	RACK 2 =	15
H4 O1 N1 E1 Y4 S1	RACK 3 =	16
A1 P3 P3 R1 I1 Z10 E1	RACK 4 =	110
H4 A1 L1 C3 Y4 O1 N1	RACK 5 =	65
PAR SCORE 180-190	JUDD'S TOTAL	278

JUMBLE

THAT SCRAMBLED WORD GAME
By David L. Hoyt and Jeff Knurek

Unscramble these Jumbles, one letter to each square, to form four ordinary words.

SUPHL

FICFL

VOROGY

LDUONT

Wow! It looks like you've been everywhere.
I've learned a lot of ins and outs over the years.
You know this is all on the ship's computer...
THE CAPTAIN KEPT INFO ABOUT EACH DESTINATION'S DOCKING DETAILS IN HIS ---

Get the free JUST JUMBLE app • Follow us on Twitter @PlayJumble

Now arrange the circled letters to form the surprise answer, as suggested by the above cartoon.

Print your answer here: _____ (Answers tomorrow)

Saturday's Jumbles: VAULT GRAPH ONLINE ELDEST
Answer: When they completed the jigsaw puzzle, they were — ALL TOGETHER

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HITORI-3303

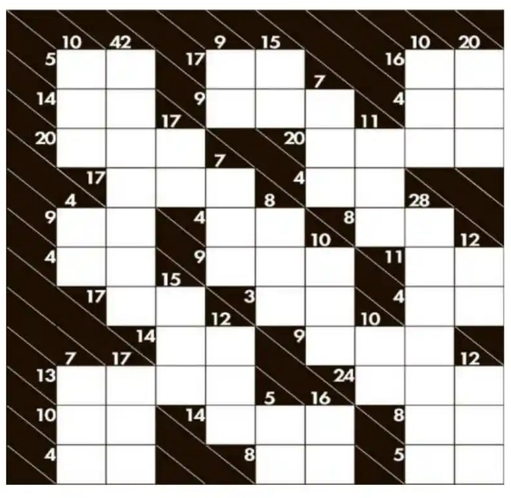
2	3	7	1	1	2	8	3
1	7	3	3	6	3	2	4
2	3	4	3	1	5	1	3
5	2	6	8	2	7	3	1
7	1	1	3	4	3	1	2
3	1	3	4	7	1	5	3
4	6	2	6	8	1	4	7
8	5	3	2	3	3	1	3

SOLUTION TO 3302

2	3	7	■	8	1	6	■
■	6	■	7	3	5	■	2
1	7	3	■	5	■	8	4
8	■	6	4	1	3	2	5
3	8	■	2	■	6	4	■
6	■	4	5	2	■	7	1
■	5	2	3	7	8	■	6
7	2	■	6	■	4	3	■

To solve the puzzle: Eliminate numbers by filling in squares so that remaining cells in that row or column do not repeat that number more than once. Filled-in cells cannot be horizontally or vertically adjacent. The un-filled cells must form a single component connected horizontally and vertically.

KAKURO- 3303



SOLUTION TO 3302

To solve the puzzle: Put a number from 1 through 9 in a cell. No zeros. A number in a cell separated by diagonal line tells the sum of numbers in consecutive cells at its right or downward. No number may appear more than once in consecutive cells.

SU DO KU X - 3850

■								■
2	■						■	7
1	5	7	4			■		
6		1	■		■			2
4				■		8		
3			■		9	4	6	
	2	6				3		9
	■						4	
■								■

SOLUTION TO 3849

3	5	2	4	7	1	8	9	6
9	1	7	8	5	6	4	2	3
4	6	8	2	3	9	7	1	5
7	9	1	6	8	3	5	4	2
2	3	5	9	4	7	6	8	1
8	4	6	1	2	5	9	3	7
1	7	9	3	6	4	2	5	8
6	8	3	5	9	2	1	7	4
5	2	4	7	1	8	3	6	9

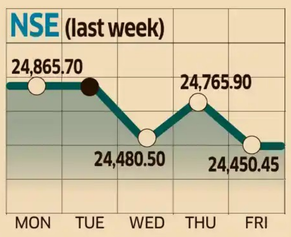
To solve the puzzle: The objective is to place the numbers 1 to 9 in the empty squares so that each row, each column, each 3x3 box and each shaded diagonal line contains the same number only once.

BSE (last week)

*Data as of Mar 6

TOP GAINERS		TOP LOSERS	
BEL	5.38%	INDIGO	-8.68%
SUNPHARMA	3.50%	LT	-7.75%
RELIANCE	0.78%	TATA STEEL	-6.52%
INFY	0.64%	BAJAJ FINSV	-6.20%
POWERGRID	0.15%	ETERNAL	-5.80%

NSE (last week)



*Markets were closed on Tuesday on account of Holi

TOP GAINERS		TOP LOSERS	
BEL	5.34%	TATA MOT PASS	-8.34%
HINDALCO	3.70%	L&T	-7.68%
SUN PHARMA	3.59%	SHRIRAM FIN	-6.66%
COAL INDIA	2.28%	HDFC LIFE INS	-6.54%
DR REDDY'S	1.36%	TATA STEEL	-6.53%

Sensex (52-week)

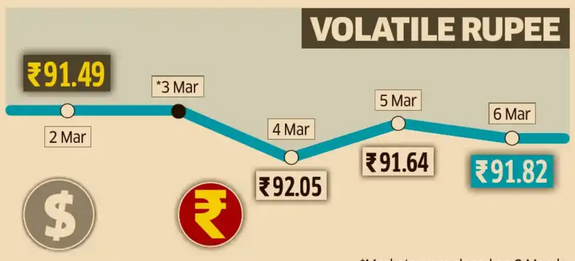
Mar 6, 2025	Mar 6, 2026	
74,340.09	79,818.90	7.37%

Nifty (52-week)

Mar 6, 2025	Mar 6, 2026	
22,544.70	24,450.45	8.45%

10-year Bond yield 6.68%

VOLATILE RUPEE



Exchange Rates*

Dollar	₹ 91.82	SGD	₹ 71.67
Pound	₹ 122.49	Yen (100 units)	₹ 50.08
Euro	₹ 106.41		

*Markets were closed on 3 March on account of Holi

*Price at which banks sell

Crude Oil Rate ($ per barrel)

BRENT CRUDE
$92.69*
8.52%
*Rate as of Mar 7

Bengaluru fuel pump price*

(Retail)
Petrol* ₹102.99 ₹0.03%
Diesel* ₹91.06 ₹0.07%

*Rates as of Mar 8 #Rate change compared with yesterday

Commodity watch

COFFEE

Category	Rate (Rs per 50 kg)*
Arabica Parchment	₹ 22000 - 22500
Arabica Cherry	₹ 12000 - 13400
Robusta Parchment	₹ 17500 - 18000
Robusta Cherry	₹ 9400 - 10300

*Rates as on Mar 6

Other Commodities

Silkworm cocoon (Rs per kg)*

Bivoltine (BV)	₹ 757
Cross Breed (CB)	₹ 705

*Average rates as on Mar 6

Iran war threatens prolonged hit to global energy markets

Waves of War around the World

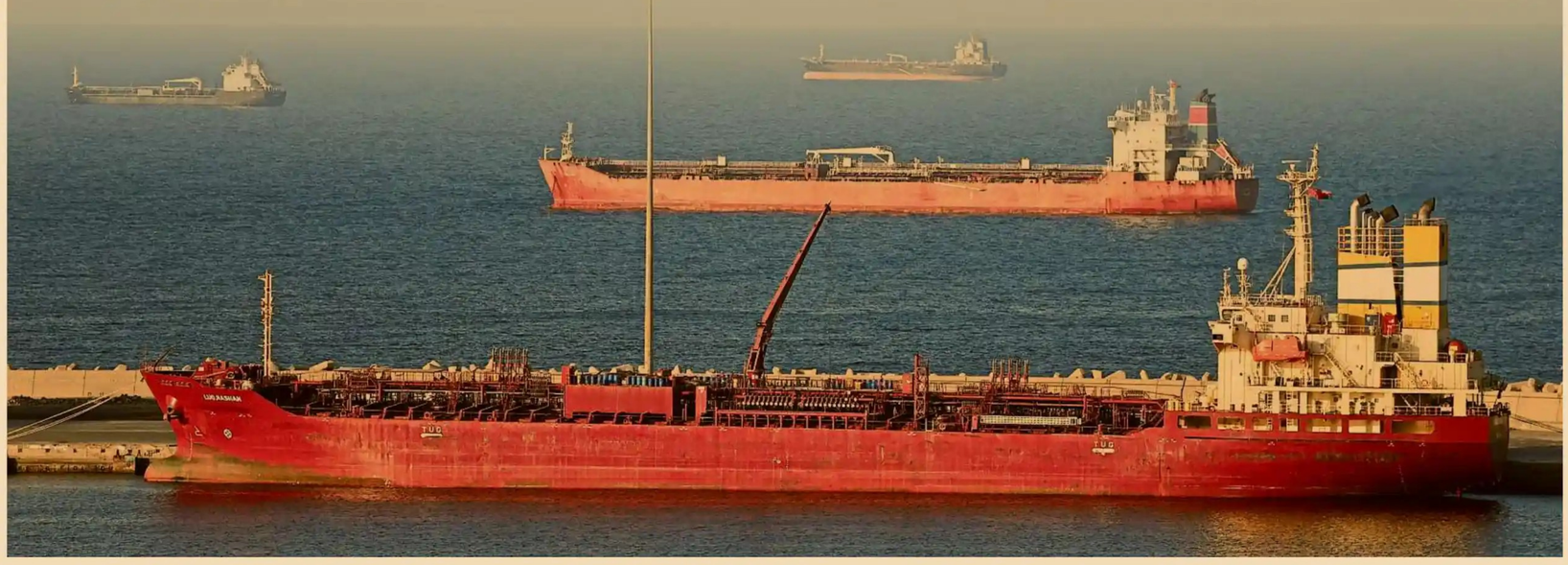
The escalating conflict in West Asia is sending shockwaves through global energy markets. Attacks on oil infrastructure and shipping routes are disrupting supplies, raising concerns about prolonged fuel price volatility and wider economic repercussions

Global oil prices surge
- Global oil prices have risen by over 25% in just a week
- Fuel costs for consumers worldwide expected to remain high for weeks or months

Energy infrastructure under attack
- Iranian strikes have forced refineries and export terminals across West Asia to shut down
- QatarEnergy declared force majeure on gas exports, affecting 20% of global LNG supply

Global economic ripple effects
- Countries are stockpiling oil reserves, increasing demand further
- Fuel price spikes affect Asia, Europe, and the US, raising inflation risks and political pressure

Strait of Hormuz disruption
- Attacks on shipping have disrupted around 20% of global oil and gas supply
- Major exporters like Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Iraq, and Kuwait have suspended shipments



Price hikes pose political risk for Trump amid midterm elections

REUTERS

The US-Israeli war with Iran could leave consumers and businesses worldwide facing weeks or months of higher fuel prices, even if the week-old conflict ends quickly, as suppliers grapple with damaged facilities, disrupted logistics, and elevated risks to shipping. The outlook poses a global economic threat and a political vulnerability for US President Donald Trump leading into the midterm elections, with voters sensitive to energy bills and unfavourable to foreign entanglements.

"The market is shifting from pricing pure geopolitical risk to grappling with tangible operational disruption, as refinery shutdowns and export constraints begin to impair crude processing and regional supply flows," JP Morgan analysts said in a research note. The conflict has already led to the suspension of around a fifth of global crude and natural gas supply, as Tehran targets ships in the vital Strait of Hormuz between its shores and Oman, and attacks energy infrastructure across the region. Global oil prices have surged more than 25% since the start of the war, driving up fuel prices for consumers worldwide. A nearly complete shutdown of the strait means the region's giant oil producers — Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Iraq and Kuwait — have had to suspend shipments of as much as 140 million barrels of oil, equal to about 1.4 days of global demand, to global refiners. As a result, oil and gas storage at facilities in West Asia are rapidly filling, forcing oil fields in Iraq and Kuwait to cut oil production, with the UAE likely to cut next, analysts, traders and sources said.

"At some point soon, everyone will also shut in if vessels do not come," said a source with a state oil company in the region.

Oilfields forced to shut in across West Asia as a result of the shipping disruptions could take a while to return to normal, said Amir Zaman, head of the Americas commercial team at Rystad Energy.

"The conflict could be ended, but it could take days or weeks or months, depending on the types of fields, age of the field, the type of shut-in that they've had to do before you can get production back up to what it once was," he said.

Iranian forces, meanwhile, are targeting regional energy infrastructure — including refineries and terminals — forcing them to shut down too, with some of those operations badly damaged by attacks and in need of repairs. Qatar declared force majeure on its huge volumes of gas exports on Wednesday after Iranian drone attacks and it may take at least a month to return to normal production levels, sources said. Qatar supplies 20% of global LNG. Saudi Aramco's mammoth Ras Tanura refinery and crude export terminal, meanwhile, has also closed due to attacks, with no details on damage. The White House has justified the attack on Iran, saying the country posed an imminent threat to the US, although it has not provided details. Trump has also said he was concerned about Iran's efforts to obtain a nuclear weapon.

Danger in the strait

A quick end to the war would soothe markets. But a return to pre-war supply and pricing could take weeks or months, depending on the extent of the damage to infrastructure and shipping.

"Considering physical damage due to Iranian strikes, so far we have not seen anything that would be considered structural, although the risk remains as long as the war continues," said Joel Hancock, energy analyst, Natixis CIB.

The biggest question for energy supplies is how and when the Strait of Hormuz will become safe for shipping again. Trump has offered naval escorts to oil tankers and promised US insurance support to vessels in the region. But safety in the waterway may be elusive, as Iran has the capacity to sustain drone attacks on shipping for months, intelligence and military sources have said.

The conflict could also encourage countries to top up their strategic petroleum reserves in the weeks and months after the conflict ends, by exposing the dangers of thin inventories. That would increase demand for oil and support prices.

In the meantime, the disruption in energy shipments is reverberating through supply chains and economies in import-reliant Asia, which sources 60% of its crude oil from West Asia.

In India, MRPL declared force majeure on gasoline export cargoes, sources said this week, joining a growing number of refineries in the region unable to fulfill sales contracts due to lack of supply.

At least two refineries in China have cut runs. China, a big supplier to the region, has asked refineries to suspend fuel exports. Thailand has also suspended fuel exports, while Vietnam has suspended crude shipments. Disruption has given Russia a boost. Prices for Russian crude cargoes have risen as the US has given Indian refiners a 30-day waiver to buy Russian crude to substitute for lost West Asia supply. Washington had pressured India to cut Russian oil imports under the threat of tariffs.

In Japan, the No. 2 global LNG importer, baseload power futures for Tokyo for the fiscal year starting in April jumped more than a third this week on the EEX in anticipation of higher fuel prices. And in Seoul, drivers queued up at petrol stations in anticipation of rising pump prices.

For European consumers, the crisis in gas supplies and the higher prices are a double whammy. The region was hit the hardest by the disruption to gas supplies due to sanctions on Russian energy imports after Russia invaded Ukraine in 2022.

Europe turned to LNG imports to substitute for Russian pipeline gas. And the continent now needs to buy 180 more LNG cargoes than it did last year to fill gas storage to the levels needed before next winter.

The supply risks to the US are fewer, as the country has grown in recent years into the world's largest oil and gas producer. But US crude and fuel prices rise in tandem with international crude markets, so pump prices for gasoline and diesel are affected even if domestic supply is plentiful.

US average retail gasoline, for example, hit $3.32 a gallon nationally on Friday, up 34 cents over last week, according to AAA. Diesel prices, meanwhile, hit $4.33 a gallon, up from $3.76 a gallon a week ago.

Higher prices at the pump mark a major risk for Trump and his fellow Republicans as they head into midterm elections in November.

'Current market movement largely a panic reaction'

With the war involving the Israel-US combine and Iran entering its second week, the Indian business community has concerns. The emerging geopolitical situation in West Asia is a cause for worry. Against this backdrop, *DH*'s **Mrityunjay Bose** speaks with **Vijay Kalantri**, President of the All India Association of Industries and Chairman of the World Trade Center-Mumbai, to gauge the situation, in this candid interview. *Edited excerpts:*

How do you view the current situation after one week of war?

The global business community is closely monitoring the current geopolitical tensions in West Asia, as the region plays a crucial role in international trade, energy security, and maritime logistics. Stability in this region is vital to ensure the uninterrupted movement of goods, commodities, and energy resources across global markets. The region hosts strategically-important maritime corridors, including the Strait of Hormuz, through which nearly one-fifth of global oil supplies passes every day. Disruptions in these shipping lanes will impact global energy markets, freight costs, and supply-chain stability.

Vijay Kalantri

Many Indians work in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries and the West Asia-North Africa (WANA) region, and we have extensive trade relations, right?

The safety and wellbeing of millions of people living and working in the region remains a key concern. Nearly 9 million Indians reside across these countries, contributing significantly to economic cooperation and strengthening people-to-people ties between India and the region.

What has been the Indian response?

The trade and industry community reiterates that peace, stability, and open dialogue are the cornerstones of sustainable global trade. We call upon the international community to prioritise diplomatic engagement and de-escalation, ensuring that West Asia remains a gateway for commerce and cooperation, rather than a source of global economic uncertainty.

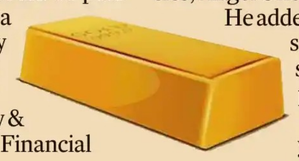
Do you foresee a major turmoil in the Indian markets?

India is relatively resilient amid the current volatility. The current market movement, whether in equities, gold, or crude, is largely a panic reaction, not a reflection of any change in economic fundamentals. We enjoy cordial relations with all countries and are not a direct participant in this conflict, and we believe in de-escalation of war and negotiations through diplomatic dialogue. With strategic petroleum reserves covering 40-45 days of requirements and crude sourced from over 40 countries, our supply flexibility is stronger than ever. We urge the business community to stay calm and avoid decisions driven by short-term fear.

Gold poised for volatile week as global tensions roil markets, say analysts

NEW DELHI, PTI: Gold prices are expected to remain volatile next week as investors track geopolitical developments in West Asia and key macroeconomic data releases that could shape the sentiment in the domestic market, analysts said.

"Focus will again be on West Asia and further escalation would be positive for gold prices, but a sign of de-escalation may trigger sharp selling," Pranav Mer, Vice-President, EBG — Commodity & Currency Research, JM Financial Services Ltd, said.



Mer added that silver is also undergoing a consolidation phase, but remains highly-volatile. "Silver too is passing through a consolidation phase but trading with high volatility, as gains are capped by consolidative moves in gold and industrial metals like Copper and Zinc," he said.

During the past week, bullion futures witnessed sharp movements in the domestic market. On the MCX, silver plunged Rs 14,359, or 5.08%, while gold slipped Rs 470, or 0.3%.

"Gold prices consolidated in a broad range last week, in a range of Rs 1.59 lakh-1.70 lakh per 10 grams," Prathamesh Mallya, DVP — Research, Non-Agri Commodities and Currencies, Angel One, said.

He added that geopolitical tensions, Asian demand, strong central bank purchases, elevated US Treasury bond yields and a firm dollar remain the key factors influencing price dynamics in the bullion market.

Globally, silver futures on the Comex slumped $8.98, or nearly 10%, while gold prices fell $89.2, or 1.7%, during the past week.

Gold has closed in the negative territory on a weekly basis amid rising demand for alternative safe-haven assets, Mer said.

HEAVY DEPENDENCY

Iran war impacts India's $11.8-billion food exports to West Asia

GYANENDRA KESHRI
NEW DELHI, DHNS

Prolonged disruption in West Asia will badly hit Indian farmers, food processors and exporters across several states including Karnataka, Telangana, Andhra Pradesh, Punjab and Maharashtra, as India's agricultural exports are heavily dependent on the Gulf markets, experts said.

In 2025, India exported nearly $11.8 billion worth of agricultural and food products to the West Asia region, accounting for more than one-fifth of the country's total agri exports. Cereals, fruits, vegetables and spices dominate India's exports basket to the Gulf region.

Rice faces the largest potential impact. India exported $4.43 billion worth of rice to West Asia in 2025, accounting for 36.7% of its global rice exports. Saudi Arabia, Iraq and Iran have been among the biggest buyers of Indian basmati rice. According to industry sources, nearly 4 lakh metric tonnes of basmati rice is currently stuck at ports or in transit.

Disruption in rice exports will badly hit farmers in the states of Punjab, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh, and Telangana.

"If instability around the Strait of Hormuz persists, the impact could ripple through India's agricultural economy, highlighting the need for exporters to diversify markets and reduce excessive dependence on a single region," said Global Trade Research Initiative (GTRI) founder Ajay Srivastava.

India's agricultural exports have developed a deep dependence on West Asian markets over the past decade, particularly for products such as rice, bananas, spices, meat and dairy products.

More than 70% of India's shipments of some food products like sheep and goat meat, fresh beef, bananas, copra and certain spices go to West Asia, making them extremely vulnerable if trade flows are disrupted. Others, including dairy products, beverages, tea and several edible oils, also depend heavily on Gulf demand.

"The Gulf has been a natural destination due to its geographic proximity and large Indian diaspora. But the ongoing conflict in West Asia, along with disruptions to shipping routes and rising insurance costs, is now creating uncertainty for exporters and could directly affect farmers and food processors across several Indian states," GTRI said in a note.

West Asia broadly includes the six Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries — Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman and Qatar — along with Iran, Iraq, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Syria and Yemen. Nearly one crore Indians live and work across the West Asia region.

According to a statement released by the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA), more than 52,000 Indians have returned to the country from the Gulf region from March 1-7. The US and Israel began joint air attacks on Iran on February 28. Since then, the conflict has widened to several countries in the region and led to disruptions in the Strait of Hormuz, one of the world's most-critical energy chokepoints.

"Though India does not buy any oil from Iran, Hormuz is crucial for India, as 40% of oil imports still pass through this waterway between Iran and Oman," SBI Research said in a note.

High oil prices and disruption in exports is likely to hit India's economy. According to SBI Research, every $10 increase in the crude oil price may lead to 35-40 bps rise in inflation.

In the worst case scenario (if oil prices reach $130 per barrel), GDP growth may plummet to 6% (on the assumption of 7% growth in FY27), SBI Research said.

India's spice exports are closely tied to Gulf demand, with 70.5% of nutmeg, mace and cardamom exports going to the region. Exports of spice seeds such as cumin and coriander reached $163 million, while ginger and turmeric totaled $173 million, with about 23% of India's exports of these products going to the region in 2025. These crops mainly support farmers in Kerala, Karnataka, Rajasthan and Gujarat.

TOP PICKS

The data is sourced from Motilal Oswal Financial Services Limited

Apollo Hospitals
(ID: APOLLOHOSP)
BUY
Upside +16%**
Last close ₹7,746
Target: ₹9,015*

Delhivery
(ID: DELHIVERY)
BUY
Upside +37%**
Last close ₹423
Target: ₹580*

Jain Resource Recycling
(ID: JAINREC)
BUY
Upside +26%**
Last close ₹413
Target: ₹520*

Aditya Birla Capital
(ID: ABCAPITAL)
BUY
Upside +27%**
Last close ₹326
Target: ₹415*

MTAR Technologies
(ID: MTARTECH)
BUY
Upside +27%**
Last close ₹3,780
Target: ₹4,810*

* Target price has been calculated on the basis of fundamentals ** Upside refers to more value stock is expected to generate than its current price

A rules-based way to reduce panic during market swings

Investing in equities can create significant wealth over time. However, equity markets can also go through phases of heightened volatility at different points in time. Investors seeking to reduce volatility in their passive equity investments can use the low vol factor. The Nifty 100 Low Vol 30 ETF tracks the Nifty 100 Low Volatility 30 Index, which comprises large-cap stocks that have shown the least volatility in the large-cap universe.

Volatility is measured using standard deviation, which tells you how much a price usually moves up or down over a period of time. In this index, eligible stocks are then ranked based on their one-year volatility score, with the stock having the lowest volatility getting a rank of 1. The top-30 ranked stocks with least volatility form part of the index.

The index is rebalanced on a quarterly basis. Volatility scores are recalculated using closing prices of the last one year. At the time of review, if the existing constituent of the index is ranked within top-60 based on the low volatility score, the stock is retained in the index. Stocks based on the lowest volatility ranks get added to the index, depending on the number of exclusions from the index due to the above rule.

The Nifty 100 Low Vol 30 is designed to reduce volatility during market corrections or consolidations. In sideways markets or periods of heightened uncertainty, low-volatility indices have historically shown better resilience as they aim to avoid stocks that are prone to sharp price swings.

For instance, During the sharp COVID-led market crash (February-March, 2020), the Nifty 50 fell 37.2% in a single month and the Nifty 100 shed 36.9%, while the Nifty 100 Low Volatility 30 limited its decline to 29.4%.

Similarly, during the largely sideways markets triggered by the US taper tantrum in 2013 (January-August, 2013), the Nifty 100 Low Volatility 30 index declined 7.7%, compared with an 8% fall in the Nifty 50 and a 9.3% drop in the Nifty 100.

On the other hand, low-volatility strategies may lag during strong, momentum-driven rallies — especially those led by high-beta stocks. When markets reward growth at any price, stability can be temporarily out of favour.

CHINTAN HARIA
PRINCIPAL – INVESTMENT STRATEGY, ICICI PRUDENTIAL AMC

An ETF trades on stock exchanges like any other listed security. This allows investors to buy and sell units intra-day, unlike index funds that transact only at end-of-day net asset values. However, ETF investors must also be mindful of liquidity, bid-ask spreads and how closely the ETF's market price tracks the underlying net asset value or iNAV of ETF. The rules require the ETF provider to publish iNAVs during the market hours.

From a portfolio construction perspective, the Nifty 100 Low Vol 30 ETF can be seen as a complement to the core equity exposure. It can work well for investors who find pure equity indices too volatile. It can also act as a stabiliser alongside more aggressive equity allocations.

The low vol index typically has exposure to defensive and consumer-oriented sectors over cyclical sectors and volatile stocks. As of December 31, 2025, the Nifty 100 Low Vol 30 index had 21.6% exposure to financial services, 16.3% to healthcare and 15.3% exposure to fast-moving consumer goods.

Over a one-year period, the index has a beta of 0.8, and 0.7 over a five-year stretch. Beta is a measure of volatility in relation to the market benchmark index — the Nifty 50 Index. A reading of under 1 indicates that the index may shed fewer points when Nifty 50 corrects. But it also means that the low vol index may gain less than Nifty 50 when the market benchmark rallies.

Thus, the Nifty 100 Low Vol 30 ETF is not designed to outperform the market in every phase. Its strength lies elsewhere. It offers a rules-based way to stay invested in equities, while attempting to manage one of the most under-appreciated risks in investing: The emotional cost of volatility. The strategy aims to moderate market-linked volatility, so that sharp swings do not panic investors into premature redemptions, while also encouraging the discipline needed to stay invested over the long term.

WOMEN IN TECH

Diverse leadership key lever

Every year on March 8, International Women's Day (IWD) is being celebrated to recognise and honour women across various fields. Here are a few women leaders who remind us that women in technology leadership must keep pace, and that there should be more representation of women in senior tech roles:

"As enterprises move from AI experimentation to full-scale operationalisation, diverse technology leadership is no longer a "nice-to-have" - it is a strategic imperative. Data governance demands leaders who understand how bias can enter training datasets and who are willing to ask uncomfortable questions about how data is collected and used. Cybersecurity, too, benefits from diverse perspectives that can anticipate threat vectors others might overlook. And ethical AI frameworks are only as robust as the range of viewpoints that stress-test them. Homogeneous leadership teams risk building blind spots into the systems they design. AI doesn't present opportunity risk, but it surely has execution risks. Diverse leadership is one of the key levers that can mitigate these risks and instill trust in users.

INDERPREET SAWHNEY, Chief Legal Officer & Chief Compliance Officer, Infosys

"The rise of AI is reshaping how we live, work and solve some of the world's most-complex challenges. As AI moves from experimentation to real-world deployment across industries, it is critical that women play a central role in shaping how these technologies are designed, built and governed. The future of AI must be inclusive by design, and that begins with ensuring diverse voices are part of the innovation process. As we enter an AI-first era, women must not only participate in this technological transformation, but help define its direction. When women lead in AI, the technology becomes more responsible, more inclusive and ultimately more impactful for society.

SINDHU GANGADHARAN, MD, SAP Labs India; Head – Customer Innovation Services, SAP; Chairperson, Nasscom

"As technology becomes more deeply embedded in business and society, inclusive leadership shapes not just innovation, but outcomes. Creating space for women in senior technology roles brings broader perspectives into decision-making and strengthens how systems are built and applied. At Wipro, this means investing in leadership pathways that enable women to grow into influential technology roles and contribute meaningfully to the organisation's digital future. Inclusion, when built into talent development and leadership design, helps ensure technology is created with responsibility, balance, and long-term impact in mind.

SANDHYA ARUN, Chief Technology Officer, Wipro Ltd

"Despite the increasing awareness of gender disparity, women remain underrepresented in technology leadership, and that includes cybersecurity. As cyber threats evolve, it is equally critical for our technology and leadership to follow. To establish a more inclusive and competitive industry, organisations have to launch initiatives to support and advance women in leadership. Structured leadership development programmes focused on upskilling and networking build relevant skills and confidence in women to step into leadership roles, while expanding their professional networks.

SWETHA SRIVASTAVA, Practice Head – Data Analytics and AI at Inspira Enterprise

"I see every day how empowering women with the right opportunities transforms not just careers, but entire organisations. Having space to learn, experiment, and lead teams brings deeper insights and stronger collaboration. STEM gives young women tools to solve real-world problems and shape tomorrow's technologies. Yet too many still hesitate because they don't see clear pathways or visible role-models. We must invest in real pathways through mentorship, flexible policies, and leadership opportunities that help women grow and thrive. When young women see leaders who look like them and are encouraged to take bold steps, confidence follows. And that confidence becomes the foundation for all our progress.

ROOPASHREE HM, R&D Director, Interface Products, Texas Instruments

"To the young women in technology, raise your hand before you feel ready. Trust your merit absolutely. Be authentically 'you' and lead in ways true to your nature. Resilience is all about transforming challenges into catalysts for growth and refusing to let others' limitations become your own.

SHARDA TICKOO, Country Manager for India and SAARC at TrendAI

Mcap of top 8 most-valued firms erodes by Rs 2.81L cr

NEW DELHI, PTI: The combined market valuation of eight of the top-10 most-valued firms eroded by Rs 2,81,581.53 crore last week, with the State Bank of India taking the biggest hit, in tandem with a weak trend in equities.

Last week, the BSE benchmark tanked 2,368.29 points, or 2.91%.

"Markets ended the holiday-shortened week with steep losses as escalating geopolitical tensions in West Asia and a sharp spike in crude oil prices weighed heavily on investor sentiment," Ajit Mishra, SVP, Research, Religare Broking Ltd, said.

From the top-10 pack, Reliance Industries and Infosys were the only gainers.

The market valuation of State Bank of India tumbled Rs 53,952.96 crore to Rs 10,55,567.27 crore.

ICICI Bank's valuation eroded by Rs 46,936.82 crore to Rs 9,40,049.82 crore and that of HDFC Bank dived Rs 46,552.3 crore to Rs 13,19,107.08 crore.

The valuation of Larsen & Toubro tanked Rs 45,629.03 crore to Rs 5,43,208.36 crore.

The market capitalisation (mcap) of Bajaj Finance dropped by Rs 28,934.56 crore to Rs 5,91,136.03 crore and that of Tata Consultancy Services (TCS) diminished by Rs 28,492.44 crore to Rs 9,25,380.15 crore.

Hindustan Unilever's mcap declined by 26,350.67 crore to Rs 5,23,042.51 crore and that of Bharti Airtel edged lower by Rs 4,732.75 crore to Rs 10,67,120.50 crore.

However, the market valuation of Reliance Industries jumped Rs 14,750.39 crore to Rs 19,01,583.05 crore.

The mcap of Infosys climbed Rs 3,459.99 crore to Rs 5,30,546.54 crore.

Reliance Industries remained the most valued domestic firm followed by HDFC Bank, Bharti Airtel, State Bank of India, ICICI Bank, TCS, Bajaj Finance, Larsen & Toubro, Infosys, and Hindustan Unilever.

Pricey summer: AC prices to increase by 5-15% amid rising costs

NEW DELHI, PTI: As the mercury starts rising, leading room air conditioner manufacturers are increasing prices in the range of 5-15% to offset sustained increases in raw material costs and supply-chain expenses.

The hikes, being rolled out between February and April, come just ahead of the peak summer season when demand typically surges.

Leading players, including Daikin, Voltas, Blue Star, LG, Haier, and Mitsubishi Heavy Industries, have announced increases across models, passing on higher input costs for key raw materials such as copper, a weaker rupee, new energy-efficiency norms, and an increase in freight costs.

Industry executives said while adjustments are unavoidable, they expect strong sales momentum this year, aided by forecasts of a hotter summer and improved energy savings from new star-rated models.

Daikin India is going to increase prices by up to 12% from April, and the hike in prices would depend on model to model, CMD Kanwaljeet Jawa said.

Blue Star MD B Thiagarajan said that the company has already taken a price increase of 8-10% in the middle of February. However, old-priced inventory is still in the market, hence there is not much difference in the market.

"Dealers lifted stocks earlier as a price increase was going to happen. They bought in early, so they will be selling the old stock," Thiagarajan said, adding that a new batch, priced higher, will take some time to reach the market.

This price hike will almost negate the benefits extended under GST 2.0 reforms on RAC, in which tax was reduced by 10-18% from the previous 28%.

WEEK AHEAD

Weak global sentiment to drive markets

Last week, markets remained under pressure amid global uncertainties, foreign investor selling

SIDDHARTHA KHEMKA

Indian equities may trade cautiously and remain largely range-bound this week amid elevated geopolitical tensions, weak global market sentiment and persistent pressure from higher crude prices. Recent sessions have witnessed sharp swings, with bouts of heavy selling followed by technical rebounds. Institutional flows, macroeconomic developments and shifts in global risk appetite will continue to guide market direction.

In this environment, investors are recommended to a calibrated approach with a focus on domestic-facing sectors that offer stronger earnings visibility. Financials, insurance, FMCG, healthcare and select industrial segments appear relatively resilient, while energy producers, oilfield services, and defence-linked sectors may find support amid geopolitical uncertainties.

On the global front, investors will track key economic indicators such as US crude inventory data, private payrolls and consumer inflation readings, which may shape expectations around upcoming monetary policy and global liquidity conditions.

Domestically, India's consumer inflation data will be monitored for signals on price trends and policy implications, alongside major international releases including EU GDP figures, US retail sales, factory orders and labour market data.

Crude oil prices remain elevated around $80-84 per barrel due to supply constraints and West Asia tensions. For India, persistently high oil prices pose challenges by fueling inflation and widening the current account deficit, making financial markets sensitive to crude price movements. However, some relief has emerged as the US has allowed India to continue purchasing Russian energy, while Iran has permitted Indian vessels to transit through the Strait of Hormuz, easing immediate supply concerns.

In addition, the US government has initiated measures such as government-backed war-risk insurance and naval escorts for commercial vessels in the Gulf region to safeguard shipping routes. Elevated crude prices and global risk aversion have contributed to currency pressures, with the Indian rupee weakening past the Rs 92-per-US dollar mark and touching a record low. A weaker rupee raises imported inflation risks, potentially affecting cost structures for energy-intensive industries.

Last week, equity markets remained under pressure amid uncertainties, persistent foreign investor selling and concerns over elevated crude prices. Benchmark indices ended lower, with the Nifty50 declining 4%, while broader markets also weakened as the Nifty Midcap100 and Nifty Smallcap250 fell 3% each, reflecting continued risk aversion. Among sectoral indices, financials emerged as the worst performers, dropping 6%. Defence stocks stood out, rising 6% during the week amid heightened geopolitical tensions and expectations of increased government spending.

KEY DATA RELEASES
- India's Consumer inflation data
- EU GDP figures
- US retail sales
- US factory orders
- US Labour market data

Bilateral engagements offer some constructive offsets to global uncertainties. India and Canada recently signed pacts covering cooperation in critical minerals and long-term uranium supplies. Separate discussions between India and Finland have also emphasised collaboration across renewable energy, smart grids, critical minerals, AI, cybersecurity and advanced manufacturing, signalling emerging opportunities in technology-led and clean-energy sectors.

Amid these challenges, some positive developments have emerged on the domestic front. GDP growth surprised positively under the revised base year of 2022-23, with Q3FY26 growth recorded at 7.8% year-on-year. The expansion was led by the strongest manufacturing growth in eight quarters and robust services activity, while private consumption and investment remained firm. Nominal GDP grew 8.9% during the quarter. For FY26, real GDP growth has been revised upward to 7.6%, reflecting stronger underlying momentum, with nominal GDP growth marked higher at 8.6%.

(The writer is Head of Research, Wealth Management, Motilal Oswal Financial Services Limited)

PROPULSION PLAY

From Bengaluru to orbit: Bellatrix charts space-map for VLEO success

HRITHIK KIRAN BAGADE
BENGALURU, DHNS

Noticing the large "space" for research, growth, and long-term opportunity in India's space technology sector, Bellatrix Aerospace took off in 2015 to build critical propulsion systems for satellites. At the time, private space companies were almost unheard of, with ISRO and its vendors dominating the sector.

Today, the Bengaluru-based firm is preparing to launch its own Very Low Earth Orbit (VLEO) satellite.

"In two years, our first satellite will launch. It's application-agnostic, but we are currently focusing on a camera payload," Bellatrix COO Yashas Karanam told *DH*.

The micro-satellite will carry about 40 kg and be launched from India. Project 200, the VLEO mission, is part of Bellatrix's roadmap to develop low-orbit capabilities.

Karanam co-founded Bellatrix with CEO and CTO Rohan M Ganapathy, while they were students developing a new type of electric engine.

"We were early to the market, but realised it was a good time," he said. "A decade ago, India had no supply chain for satellite propulsion. Europe had subsystem suppliers; the US had valves, tanks, and propellant manufacturers. Everything we needed had to be imported."

Complicating matters, India was not yet a signatory to the Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR), restricting the import of critical materials. "So we indigenised everything ourselves. We built our technology team and today are an R&D-driven company with our own product lines," Karanam said.

Developing satellite engines is a long, complex process. "Rocket engines burn for seconds or minutes. Satellite engines are expected to last over 10,000 hours, survive space radiation, and operate for 15 years without maintenance. That's challenging with high temperatures," he explained. Once rockets deploy satellites, onboard thrusters enable manoeuvring.

Bellatrix propulsion systems serve multiple functions. One is 'orbit raising'; a satellite placed in a 500-km orbit may need to move to 600 km and adjust inclination or position. Satellites also require 'station keeping' to maintain orbit. 'Collision avoidance' is another function; propulsion must respond immediately to space debris threats. 'Deorbiting' is also essential; when a satellite has around 20% fuel remaining, thrusters lower its orbit for controlled atmospheric burn or sea descent. US regulations require propulsion for safe deorbiting.

"That requirement has opened opportunities for us," Karanam said, adding, "Propulsion systems are our bread and butter, but we have a broader roadmap."

Bellatrix offers two product lines: Arka and Rudra, comprising 13 systems. Arka uses electric propulsion; Rudra employs chemical propulsion similar to rockets.

"What sets us apart in chemical propulsion is replacing toxic fuels with greener alternatives," Karanam said. Bellatrix developed hydroxylammonium nitrate (HAN), a space-qualified green propellant. "With toxic fuels, satellites must be shipped weeks in advance for loading, which is expensive. Our fuel allows more flexibility," he mentioned.

Bellatrix Aerospace co-founders Yashas Karanam (left) and Rohan M Ganapathy

Electric propulsion converts fuel into plasma, ejecting ions at high velocity. Chemical propulsion generates more thrust, but consumes more fuel. "It's a trade-off," Karanam said, adding, "Chemical gives thrust; electric is sustainable and efficient."

A propulsion system includes the engine, power processing and control unit, universal propulsion controller, and propellant management system with valves, filters, and mechanical controls. Software oversees the process. Propulsion typically accounts for 10-15% of a satellite's cost.

Bellatrix serves 5-10 global and Indian clients in weather, broadcasting, GPS navigation, and defence. Internationally, it has an MoU with Astroscale Japan for space sustainability and core tech. Its US subsidiary in Delaware taps the American market, while partnerships exist in Europe. Domestically, a pact was signed recently with Bharat Electronics Limited (BEL) to support building of indigenous VLEO capabilities.

Meanwhile, the company is building a 5-acre manufacturing facility at the aerospace SEZ in Devanahalli, expected in 18 months. Currently, manufacturing is at Peenya, Bengaluru, testing at IISc, and R&D at the corporate office premises on Sankey Road.

"We aim to consolidate operations and scale production 10-fold, from 80-100 propulsion systems a year," Karanam said.

Bellatrix raised $11.3 million in Series-A funding, largely from Inflexor Ventures and BASF Venture Capital, and plans more as it grows.

India's SpaceTech industry is projected to grow from $8 billion to $44 billion by 2033, with the country increasing its share of the $470-billion global space economy from 2% to 20%.

"We want to be a strong OEM in critical core technologies," Karanam said, concluding, "Once we prove our VLEO technology in orbit, we plan to leverage it and develop new applications around it."

West Asia crisis: US Prez's warning comes as Tehran prepares to name Khamenei successor

Iran's next leader needs US approval, says Trump

TEHRAN, AFP

US President Donald Trump warned on Sunday that Iran's next supreme leader would not last long without his approval, as Tehran prepared to reveal the successor to the slain Ayatollah Ali Khamenei.

Nine days after US-Israeli strikes on his compound killed Khamenei and plunged the Middle East into war, Iran's Assembly of Experts met privately and chose their next leader, members of the body said.

The clerics did not say who had been selected, only that a name would be announced soon. Some suggested Khamenei's 56-year old son Mojtaba Khamenei would succeed his father.

Trump had previously demanded a say in the appointment and dismissed the younger Khamenei as an unacceptable "lightweight".

"He's going to have to get approval from us," Trump told ABC News on Sunday, referring to Iran's next leader. "If he doesn't get approval from us he's not going to last long."

But Tehran's top diplomat said earlier in the day that the decision was Iran's alone, adding it would "allow nobody to interfere in our domestic affairs".

Speaking on NBC's "Meet the Press", Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi went on to demand that Trump "apologise to people of the region" for the spiralling war.

The younger Khamenei is regarded as a conservative figure, notably because of his ties to the Revolutionary Guards, the ideological arm of the Islamic republic's military.

Israel's military has warned any successor that "we will not hesitate to target you".

Trump again refused to rule out sending US ground troops into Iran, but continued to insist that the war was all but won despite the ongoing Iranian missile and drone strikes.

The US President spoke with British Prime Minister Keir Starmer on Sunday, Downing Street said, after Trump had lobbed insults at the premier and accused him of trying to join a war "we've already won".

The pair discussed military cooperation, London said, with Britain having granted the US use of its military bases for "collective self-defence of partners in the region", having refused to allow their use for the initial strikes on Iran.

Guards spokesman Ali Mohammad Naini said Iran would use "advanced, long-range missiles" in coming days.

Special forces for seizing Tehran's nuclear stockpile

The United States and Israel have discussed sending special forces into Iran to secure its stockpile of highly enriched uranium at a later stage of the war, Axios reported on Saturday, citing four sources with knowledge of the discussions, reports Reuters. Reuters could not immediately verify the report.

How private jets are emerging as an alternative way out of the Gulf

1 Commercial flight disruptions and airspace closures

- Escalating conflict involving Iran has led to airspace restrictions, flight cancellations, and reduced airport operations across parts of the Gulf.
- Major hubs such as Dubai, Doha, and other regional airports are operating far below normal capacity, leaving many travellers stranded.

2 Urgent demand to leave the region

- Residents, tourists, expatriates, and businesses are trying to exit the Gulf quickly due to security concerns and uncertainty about further escalation.

3 For faster and more flexible departures

- Private charters allow travellers to avoid long waiting times and uncertain schedules of commercial airlines.
- They can depart from alternative airports or smaller airfields and can be arranged within 12–24 hours of inquiry.

4 Alternative evacuation routes

- Many travellers first cross borders into Oman or Saudi Arabia by road and then board private jets from cities like Muscat or Riyadh where airports remain open.

5 Sharp surge in demand

- Charter brokers report a tenfold increase in enquiries from individuals and companies trying to relocate families or staff.
- At Muscat airport in Oman, around 30% of departures have been private flights during the crisis.

6 High costs limit access

- Chartering a small jet from Dubai to Europe can cost $100,000–$200,000, often double the normal price.
- Some operators are selling individual seats on chartered jets for ₹1.5–2.5 lakh per person, far above regular airline fares.

Arab League chief terms Tehran attacks a strategic mistake

CAIRO, AFP: The Arab League's secretary-general said Sunday that Iranian attacks on several member states were "reckless", urging Tehran to reverse what he called a "massive strategic mistake".

In response to a US-Israeli air campaign that began on February 28, Iran has launched retaliatory strikes on Israel and Gulf states. Addressing an emergency videoconference of Arab foreign ministers from Cairo, Ahmed Aboul Gheit said the strikes "cannot be justified under any pretext or excuse", accusing Tehran of responding to Gulf peace efforts with "treacherous rockets and drone attacks".

He said Arab states were "not parties to the ongoing war" and had made it clear they would not allow "their territory or airspace to be used" to launch attacks.

Several Arab countries, including Oman had put in "earnest, sincere and serious efforts to spare the entire region," Aboul Gheit added.

US Prez downplays report on Russia's intel share

DORAL (US), AP

President Donald Trump said on Saturday that it was inconsequential if Russia has provided Iran with information to help Tehran target US military personnel and assets in the Middle East as the week-old war rages.

The president dismissed the import of such information-sharing after he attended the dignified transfer for six Army reservists who were killed in a drone strike in Kuwait the day after the US and Israel launched a war on Iran that has unsettled the global economy.

Trump stopped short of confirming reports by The Associated Press and other news outlets that US intelligence officials believe Russia has provided Iran with such targeting information. But if Moscow is passing on such details, he said Iran was getting little out of it.

"If you take a look at what has happened to Iran in the last week, if they are getting information, it is not helping them much," Trump told reporters on Air Force One as he flew to Miami, where he is spending the rest of the weekend.

The president also waved off a question about how Russia assisting Iran in such a way might affect his view of the US-Russia relationship.

"They would say we do it against them," Trump responded. "Wouldn't they say that we do it against them?"

Ukraine, in the four years since it was invaded by Russia, has received US intelligence to help defend against incoming missiles from Russia as well as to help Kyiv hit certain Russian targets.

Downplaying the significance of Russia handing off battlespace intelligence to Iran came after the US Treasury Department announced earlier this week that it was temporarily allowing India to keep buying crude oil and petroleum products from Russia for a month, until April 4.

French Prez Macron speaks with Pezeshkian

French President Emmanuel Macron has spoken with Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian, calling on Iran to halt strikes against other countries in the region and to end the closure of the Strait of Hormuz, Macron said on Sunday, reports Reuters.In a post on X, Macron also reiterated France's position that a diplomatic solution was necessary to end the conflict.

Gen Z probe panel submits its report to Nepal govt

KATHMANDU, PTI: A high-level commission to probe the killings, arson and damages during the Gen Z protests in September last year submitted its report to Nepal's interim government on Sunday, blaming lack of good governance and inefficiency by the then administration.

As the probe report was submitted to the interim Prime Minister Sushila Karki at the PM Office at Singhdurbar, neither the commission chief nor the government released any names of persons responsible for shooting at Gen Z protesters and other related issues.

A total of 76 people were killed during the two day protest – 22 youths on September 8 while 54 others on the next day.

A week after Sushila Karki took over as the interim prime minister, a decision by the cabinet on September 21 led to the formation of the judicial inquiry commission led by former Supreme Court justice Gauri Bahadur Karki.

Two ex-PMs lose, only Prachanda survives RSP tsunami in Nepal

Party formed in 2022 headed for two-thirds victory

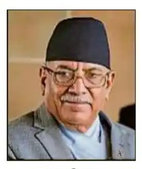
KATHMANDU, PTI

Among the three former prime ministers who contested the March 5 general election in Nepal, only Pushpakamal Dahal 'Prachanda' managed to win his seat amid the RSP tsunami decimating the old guard in the Himalayan nation.

On Saturday, the Rashtriya Swatantrata Party (RSP), formed in 2022, is headed to a two-thirds victory by winning 120 of the 156 seats for which results have been declared as of 5:30 pm.

The biggest loss by a legacy party that sent shockwaves across the Himalayan country came when RSP's prime ministerial candidate Balendra Shah 'Balen' defeated K P Oli, chair of CPN-UML and four-time prime minister, with a huge margin in Jhapa-5 constituency, which was his and his party's stronghold for years.

Supporters of the RSP gather outside the Election Commission ahead of the announcement of results, in Kathmandu, Nepal. PTI



Pushpa Kamal Dahal 'Prachanda'

In a proverbial David versus Goliath fight, Balen, 35, secured 68,348 votes against 74-year-old Oli's 18,734 in the constituency in eastern Nepal's Koshi province, where the former prime minister had remained undefeated for years.

The March 5 general elections were necessitated after Oli resigned on September 9 last year, following violent two-day protests by the youth-led Gen Z group.

Balen chose the Jhapa-5 constituency to take on Oli thus making it a direct fight between the conservative old guard versus the new face of hope.

Prachanda, 71, who is known for choosing a new constituency every election, had contested the March 5 election from Rukum East.

In 2007, Prachanda had won from Rolpa-2 and Kathmandu-10, then in 2013 he lost Kathmandu-10 but won from Siraha-5. In 2017, he won from Chitawan-3, then shifted to Gorkha-2 in 2022.

China pushes for talks as US targets its key partners

BEIJING, REUTERS

US-China dialogue is vital to preventing globally damaging miscalculations, China's top diplomat said on Sunday, ahead of a highly anticipated summit this month between leaders Xi Jinping and Donald Trump.

"Failure to engage between the two nations would only lead to misunderstandings and misjudgements, escalating toward confrontation and harming the world," Foreign Minister Wang Yi told a press conference.

With the US president focused on the war he and Israel launched against Iran, analysts are watching for signs that his visit to meet Xi will go ahead. "The agenda for high-level exchanges (with the U.S.) is on the table," Wang said. "What is required is for both sides to make thorough preparations to create a conducive environment to manage existing differences," he added, without giving further details. In addition to the week-old Iran war, which has killed Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei and more than 1,300 others in the country, according to Tehran, Trump authorised the capture of Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro in January, testing Beijing's commitment to its strategic partners.

On Iran, Wang urged an immediate halt to military operations, saying the war that should not have happened and that the use of force was not a way to resolve issues.

Trump's pursuit of a "Donroe Doctrine" - his rebranding of a 19th-century policy asserting Washington's zone of influence in the Americas - is crashing into Xi's flagship Belt and Road and Global Security initiatives, which have been decades in the making. Trump has also threatened military action against Colombia and Mexico and said Cuba's communist regime "looks like it's ready to fall" on its own, raising questions for Latin American countries over how their China ties might protect them if put to the test.

Putin blames West for Ukraine crisis as peace talks remain uncertain

MOSCOW, PTI: Russian President Vladimir Putin has blamed Western countries for triggering the Ukraine crisis, saying the conflict stemmed from their support for the change of power in Kyiv.

Putin made the remarks in an interview for the state television programme "Moscow, Kremlin, Putin", excerpts of which were aired on the Rossiya 24 channel on Sunday.

"Where did the Ukrainian crisis come from? It arose from Western countries' support for the coup in Ukraine, and then the events in Crimea, and then in the southeast of Ukraine - Donbass and Novorossiya as a whole. This is where it all began," he said.

"These are not our actions - these are the actions of Western countries, including European countries. They are now reaping what they sowed," Putin said. His comments came as the next round of US-brokered peace talks between Russia and Ukraine remains uncertain.

Putin also accused the Ukrainian leadership of manipulating European countries, using the phrase "the tail wagging the dog" to describe the situation. "The situation is very strange. Because I get the impression that we are dealing with a case that is called 'the tail wagging the dog', rather than the other way around," Putin said.

India and China are partners, not rivals: Wang Yi

BEIJING, PTI

India and China should view each other as "partners, not rivals" and "opportunity instead of threat", Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi said here on Sunday.

Wang, at his annual press conference on the sidelines of the Chinese parliament, the National People's Congress (NPC), said both countries should stick to the direction set by Prime Minister Narendra Modi and President Xi Jinping to improve relations without interference.

Modi and Xi had a successful meeting in Tianjin last August, Wang said. "Building on the fresh start enabled by their Kazan meeting in 2024, the Tianjin summit brought about further improvement in China-India relations," he added.

"We are heartened to see re-energised interactions at all levels, a new record in bilateral trade, and closer people-to-people exchanges. All this has brought tangible benefits to the two peoples," he said.

On the future course of the ties, Wang said both countries "must maintain the correct strategic perception of each other as partner rather than rival, and opportunity instead of threat".

"Both sides also must uphold good-neighbourliness and friendship, and jointly safeguard peace and stability in the border areas and focus on development," he said.

"As each other's important neighbours and members of the Global South, China and India enjoy profound civilisational ties and share extensive common interests," Wang said.

"Mutual trust and cooperation is beneficial to the development of the two countries, while division and confrontation is detrimental to the rejuvenation of Asia," the Chinese foreign minister said.

The two sides should follow the direction set by leaders and remove interference, he said without elaborating.

Beijing spurns G2 global co-governance

China on Sunday rejected the G2 concept of global co-governance between Beijing and Washington, saying that managing international affairs requires the collective efforts of all nations, reports PTI.

Last year, US President Donald Trump described the meeting with his Chinese counterpart Xi Jinping in South Korea as a "G2 meeting", saying the two countries could work together for their benefit and that of the world.

WORLD AT A GLANCE

Cem Ozdemir (L), top candidate of the Greens addresses supporters next to Environment Minister Thekla Walker after exit polls were announced in the state elections on Sunday in Stuttgart, southern Germany. AFP

German state election deals blow to Merz: Exit polls

▶ The German Greens on Sunday beat Friedrich Merz's conservative CDU in a state poll, exit polls showed, marking a blow for the chancellor ahead of elections this year as polls show the far right surging, reports AFP.

Over 31 percent of voters opted for the Greens led by Cem Ozdemir, according to exit polls by broadcasters ARD and ZDF, edging out the CDU with around 30 percent.

Updated exit polls for both broadcasters showed the far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD) almost doubling its result compared with 2021 elections, taking third place with about 18 percent of the vote. The CDU will be hoping that the Green's narrow lead evaporates as results roll in through the night. It had until recently notched up large poll leads in the state before they shrunk in recent months, with the most recent poll ahead of the vote putting the two parties at a dead heat at 28%. Baden-Wuerttemberg's neighbour, Rhineland-Pfalz, votes in a couple of weeks and September will see a series of regional votes in ex-communist eastern Germany, where the AfD can expect to perform well.

Former bank manager Manuel Hagel, 37, led the CDU in the campaign and hit a rough patch after an eight-year-old video emerged in which he commented on female students' appearances after a school visit, earning condemnation from across the political spectrum.

The Greens' candidate, Cem Ozdemir, 60, could now become Germany's first state premier of Turkish heritage if his party emerges as the largest and joins a coalition.

583 Taliban operatives killed: Pak

▶ Pakistan's security forces have killed 583 Afghan Taliban operatives in the ongoing military operation launched along the border last month, according to an official data released on Sunday, reports PTI from Islamabad.

Pakistan launched Operation Ghazab lil-Haq on Feb 26 after the Afghan Taliban attacked 53 locations along the border.

Providing an update on social media, Information Minister Attaullah Tarar said the Taliban losses include "583 killed and 795 injured".

He also said Pakistan destroyed 242 Taliban check posts during the ongoing operation, while another 38 posts were captured and later on destroyed.

Tarar said 213 Taliban tanks, armoured vehicles and artillery guns have been destroyed and 64 locations across Afghanistan have been "effectively targeted by air". Meanwhile, official sources said the armed forces thwarted an infiltration bid by TTP terrorists in the Chaman border area.

People take part in a demonstration to mark International Women's Day, in Valletta, Malta on Sunday. REUTERS

New hunt for flight MH370 ends

▶ The latest search for Malaysia Airlines flight MH370, which went missing 12 years ago in one of aviation's greatest enduring mysteries, concluded in January without yielding any findings, Malaysia's transport ministry said on Sunday, reports AFP from Kuala Lumpur.

The Boeing 777 carrying 239 people vanished from radar screens on March 8, 2014, while en route from Kuala Lumpur to Beijing.

Two-thirds of the passengers were Chinese, while the others included Malaysians, Indonesians and Australians, as well as Indian, American, Dutch and French nationals.

Despite multiple searches, including the largest in aviation history, neither the aircraft, passengers nor black boxes have ever been found.

The latest search, which began in December, scoured an area of around 15,000 square kilometres but efforts "have not yielded any findings".

Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelenskyy (L) welcomes The Netherlands' Prime Minister Rob Jetten upon his arrival and ahead of their meeting outside the Mariinskyi Palace in Kyiv on Sunday. AFP

Zayyan wins Rajpipla Trophy

MUMBAI RESULTS

Pesi Shroff-trained Zayyan, ridden by G Vivek, won the Rajpipla Trophy, the feature event of the races on Sunday.

1. S Padmanabhan Cup - 1400M: Fourth Wing (Yash Narredu) 1; Bee Magical (Neeraj Rawal) 2; Earth (Aditya Waydande) 3; Ardakan (G Vivek) 4; Wb: Hd, 1/2, 3L.. T: 1:21.70. TB: Aman Altaf Hussain. Fav: Fourth Wing.

2. JP Vazifdar Trophy - 1600M: Don Julio (P Dhebe) 1; Tyrannus (Neeraj Rawal) 2; Seneca (G Vivek) 3; Rambler (Yash Narredu) 4; Wb: Hd, 1-1/4, 1L. T: 1:36.49. TB: Rehanullah Khan. Fav: Don Julio.

3. Rajpipla Trophy - 1400M: Zayyan (G Vivek) 1; Lion Heart (Akshay Kumar) 2; Spectra (P Dhebe) 3; Golden Eye (Nikhil Parmar) 4; Wb: 6, Shd, 2-1/2L. T: 1:22.40. TB: Pesi Shroff. Fav: Zayyan.

4. J Rustomji Soparivala Trophy - 1000M: Staria (Akshay Kumar) 1; Lucky Diamond (G Vivek) 2; Queen Caroline (SG Prasad) 3; Sporting Alice (Neeraj Rawal) 4; Wb: 1-1/2, Hd, 2-1/4L. T: 0:57.94. TB: Pradeep Chouhan. Fav: Staria.

5. Greater Mumbai Police Trophy - 1000M: Ensky (C Umesh) 1; House Of Lords (Bharat Singh) 2; Jaisalmer (Dashrath Singh) 3; Chelsea (Aditya Waydande) 4; Wb: 1-3/4, 1/2L, Shd. T: 0:57.96. TB: Faisal Abbas. Fav: Heavens Rhythm.

6. Vallabhdas H Adwalia Trophy - 1400M: Golden Heart (Yash Narredu) 1; Beyond Starsl (Zervan) 2; Golden Hammer (Aditya Waydande) 3; Cassat (Santosh) 4; Wb: 1-1/2, 3, 1-1/2L. T: 1:23.86. TB: Mallesh Narredu. Fav: Golden Hammer.

7. A Geddei Plate - 1200M: Interceptor (Yash Narredu) 1; Desert Classic (Nikhil Parmar) 2; Believe (B Nikhil) 3; Silver Strike (Umesh) 4; Wb: 1-1/4, 1-3/4, 1/2L. T: 1:10.10. TB: Faisal Abbas. Fav: Interceptor.

Bengaluru dividends

I race: Rs 17w; 11, 14, 12p; Fc: Rs 135; Q: Rs 73; Shp: Rs 48; Thp: Rs 28; Tri: Rs 336 & 89; . Ex: Rs 1,842 & 1,065.

II race: Rs 17w; 10, 12, 13p; Fc: Rs 41; Q: Rs 29; Shp: Rs 34; Thp: Rs 32; Tri: Rs 112 & 39; Ex: Rs 156 & 80.

III race: Rs 12w; 11, 14, 28p; Fc: Rs 29; Q: Rs 34; Shp: Rs 32; Thp: Rs 62; Tri: Rs 178 & 108; Ex: Rs 1,461 & 589.

IV race: Rs 18w; 11, 11, 21p; Fc: Rs 28; Q: Rs 18; Shp: Rs 28; Thp: Rs; 41; Tri: Rs 92 & 78; Ex: Rs 288 & 146.

V race: Rs 59w; 11, 36, 18p; Fc: Rs 825; Q: Rs 699; Shp: Rs 66; Thp: Rs 48; Tri: Rs 2,420 & 1,382; Ex: Rs 14,296 & 4,084.

VI race: Rs 36w; 24, 14, 14p; Fc: Rs 134; Q: Rs 54; Shp: Rs 44; Thp: Rs 53; Tri: Rs 198 & 59; Ex: Rs 4,429 & 3,796.

VII race: Rs 21w; 12, 15, 35p; Fc: Rs 219; Q: Rs 140; Shp: Rs 54; Thp: Rs 86; Tri: Rs 1,504 & 619; Ex: Rs 1,619 & 416.

Jackpot: Rs 1,035 (741).
Runner-up: Rs 202 (1626).
Treble: Rs 585 (185).

One N Only for feature

HYDERABAD SELECTIONS

Donald Netto-trained One N Only, to be ridden by Sonu Kumar, is fancied to win the Attractress Plate, the feature event of the races to be run over a sprint on Monday. The first race starts at 3:30 pm.

1. Bhupalpally Plate - 1200M: Turiya 1, Equine Power 2, Dream To Fly 3.
2. Republic Plate - 1200M: Lifes Journey 1, Crimson Flame 2, Clefairy 3.
3. Astonish Plate - 1100M: Star Of Opera 1, Dubai touch 2, Brilliant Lad 3.
4. Suryapet Plate - 1200M: Golden Bourbon 1, Tupac 2, Bold Indian 3.
5. Zoom Zoom Plate - 1100M: Super Splash 1, Wind Castle 2, Yali 3.
6. Attractress Plate - 1200M: One N Only 1, Diablo 2, Lashka 3.
7. Red Satin Plate - 1400M: One Nation 1, Term Deposit 2, Andre 3.

Day's best: Lifes Journey. **Jackpot:** 2, 3, 4, 6, 7. **I treble:** 2, 3, 4. **II treble:** 5, 6, 7.

IN BRIEF

Akaash to lead State team

The men's defending champion Akaash Ashok Kumar and last year's women's runner-up Preemal J will spearhead Karnataka's challenge at the ARC 34th National Tenpin Bowling Championships starting from March 9 to 14 at Amoeba, Church Street in Bengaluru, reports DHNS.

Karnataka squad: Men: Akaash Ashok Kumar, Kishan R, Parvez Ahmed, Vijay Punjabi, Shanmugananda, Surjeet Singh, AV Sathish, Kunal Jain, James Christy, Sahil Punjabi, Dhanush Reddy, Surendra Babu, Kishan Cheranda, Manjunath Damodar, Prathyek Satya, Channakesava J, Allen Richards, Manohar Hegde.
Women: Preemal J, Hitasha Sisodiya, Geetha Poojary, Swathi Nayak.

Miami down DC United

Lionel Messi moved to the brink of another goalscoring milestone as Inter Miami bagged their second win of the Major League Soccer season with a 2-1 victory over DC United on Saturday, reports AFP from Washington.

The Argentine superstar's 80th goal for Miami takes his career tally to 899, just one away from reaching the 900-goal milestone.

◆ ON TV ◆

HOCKEY

Women's WC Qualifiers: Italy vs Austria **(12:45 pm)**, Korea vs England **(3 pm)**, Uruguay vs Wales **(5:15 pm)**, India vs Scotland **(7:30 pm)**. **LIVE** on **Star Sports Network, JioHotstar.**

FOOTBALL

ISL: Punjab FC vs North East United FC **(7:30 pm)**. **LIVE** on **Sony Sports Network, FanCode.**

BADMINTON ALL ENGLAND OPEN

Fighting Lakshya falls one short

Indian shuttler loses 15-21, 20-22 to Taipei's Chun-Yi in the final

BIRMINGHAM, PTI

Lakshya Sen returns against Lin Chun-Yi during their men's singles final at the All England Open Badminton Championships in Birmingham on Sunday. This was the Indian's second runner-up finish at the tournament. AFP

Lakshya Sen fought with all his might but fell agonisingly short of ending India's 25-year wait for an All England crown, losing to Chinese Taipei's Lin Chun-Yi in a high-intensity men's singles final here on Sunday.

Playing his second All England final after finishing runner-up in 2022, the 24-year-old from Almora fought hard before losing 15-21, 20-22 in a 57-minute contest, marked by high-speed rallies and relentless attacking play.

The triumph made Lin Chun-yi the first player from Chinese Taipei to win the All England men's singles title.

Lakshya's defeat meant that Prakash Padukone (1980) and Pullela Gopichand (2001) remain the only Indians to have won the prestigious title, while Prakash Nath (1947) and Saina Nehwal (2015) had come closest with runner-up finishes before Lakshya's two final appearances.

Lakshya had arrived in the summit clash in impressive form after defeating some of the world's best players such as world No. 1 Shi Yu Qi and World No. 6 Li Shi Feng during the week.

The Indian had endured a gruelling route to the final, including a marathon 97-minute semifinal against Canada's Victor Lai during which he battled severe cramps and blisters on his foot.

By the time he stepped on court on Sunday, Lakshya had spent five hours and 16 minutes in matches during the tournament -- nearly an hour and a half more than Lin -- and the physical toll appeared to show in the final stages.

Playing with strapping on both thighs, Lakshya made a slow start and trailed 0-3 as Lin immediately asserted himself with sharp attacking play.

The left-handed Taiwanese, known for his explosive offence, repeatedly targeted the lines with stinging smashes, racing to a 6-2 lead while the Indian struggled to settle into rhythm.

Lakshya gradually found his range, mixing smashes with delicate touches at the net to close the gap to 7-8 before pressing Lin with quick attacking bursts.

However, the Taiwanese maintained a slender advantage at the mid-game interval and soon stretched the lead after a fortunate net cord and a series of powerful jump smashes that left Lakshya scrambling.

Lin's ability to disguise both straight and cross-court smashes with the same action made reading his attack difficult as he surged ahead to 18-13.

Lakshya tried to stay alive with a series of retrieving efforts and precise pushes to the backline but Lin sealed the opening game in 24 minutes to leave the Indian facing an uphill battle.

The second game began with Lakshya still searching for rhythm and trailing 3-4 after a couple of wide tosses.

But the Indian soon turned the momentum around.

Capitalising on a series of errors from Lin, Lakshya surged to a 7-4 lead and then extended it to 9-4 as the Taiwanese briefly struggled with his length.

Lakshya held a three-point cushion at the break and pushed further ahead to 13-9 with a precise return that clipped the line.

However, Lin responded with a barrage of smashes to narrow the gap and soon levelled the contest at 14-14.

A thrilling exchange followed as the two traded blows in a remarkable 46-shot rally that drew loud applause from the crowd.

Lin edged ahead 16-15 with a perfectly disguised drop, but Lakshya replied with a 321 kmph smash to restore parity.

Vaishnavi beats Ankita to lift title

21-year-old third seed posts 7-6 (3), 6-4 win in final

BENGALURU, DHNS

India's Vaishnavi Adkar lifted the singles title at the ITF W35 Kalaburagi with a determined 7-6 (3), 6-4 victory over compatriot Ankita Raina in the final on Sunday.

Vaishnavi produced a composed performance in a closely contested all-Indian final to claim the title, earning 35 WTA ranking points along with the USD 4,860 prize money. Ankita was awarded USD 2,637 and 23 ranking points.

"It was a very good week for me, conditions were very tough and I just feel proud that I was able to push till the last match in these conditions," said Vaishnavi.

"Since I was a kid, I have seen Ankita play at a high level. So, competing with her, playing doubles with her is a very big thing. I knew that she doesn't give up till the last point. So, I just had to keep fighting every point."

Third seed Vaishnavi made a strong start to the match, striking clean winners from both wings to earn two break points in the opening game before forcing an error from Ankita to break serve. She consolidated the early advantage with a comfortable hold to move 2-0 ahead. Ankita gradually found her rhythm, using the width of the court well to hold serve and then capitalising on an error from Vaishnavi to break back and level the score at 2-2.

The momentum continued to shift as Vaishnavi stepped into the court to strike aggressive returns and break again for a 3-2 lead, only for Ankita to respond with attacking returns of her own to restore parity at 3-3. Both players held firm through a series of tight games, with Vaishnavi mixing in drop shots to disrupt Ankita's rhythm. The set remained tight until Vaishnavi broke to lead 5-4, but Ankita fought back immediately with strong forehands to force the contest into a tie-break.

Result (prefix denotes seedings): Singles final: 3-Vaishanvi Adkar (Ind) bt 8-Ankita Raina (Ind) 7-6 (3), 6-4.

India's Vaishnavi Adkar (right) and Ankita Raina pose with the ITF W35 Kalaburagi winners and runners-up trophies, respectively, on Sunday. DH PHOTO/ TAJUDDIN AZAD

Aus drub India to give Healy a fitting farewell

PERTH, PTI

Skipper Alyssa Healy ended her career in Baggy Green with Australia's big win over India in Perth on Sunday. X

Australia translated their overwhelming dominance over the last three days into a lop-sided 10-wicket win over India in the one-off women's day-night Test here on Sunday.

Australia earlier did the ground work for their victory, bowling out India for 149 in their second innings, and then scaled down a nominal target of 25 without any ado.

It was also a fitting farewell for skipper Alyssa Healy, who ended her career in Baggy Green with a magnificent win over a rival against whom she always excelled.

Writing was very much on the wall once India started the third day at 105 for six. Overnight India batters Pratika Rawal (63) and Sneh Rana (30) took India to 132.

Rawal showed excellent temperament during her fifty but the task was way too tall for her to manage.

Once Rana was ousted by Ash Gardener with a quick delivery taking out the batter's off-stump, India combusted quickly.

A combination of Gardner and Player of the Match Annabel Sutherland fittingly ended India's innings. Sutherland took a fine tumbling catch at the edge of the circle when Rawal's mistimed pull off the off-spinner failed to find power or distance.

It also signalled the end of India's second innings.

Australia openers Georgia Voll and Phoebe Litchfield were never going to be challenged by a target of 25, and the pair did the job with ease in just 4.3 overs.

"We started well in T20Is with a series win, but could not continue the good work in ODIs and Tests but playing a full series in Australia was a good experience. The Pink Ball Test was a different challenge," said India skipper Harmanpreet Kaur said after the match.

Her Australian counterpart Healy said: "Bouncing back from the T20 series defeat was unbelievable and proud of the bunch.

"I am going to sing that team song one last time, but happy to see this team going forward and get some good results. The last week or so has been amazing," said Healy.

Brief scores: India: 198 all out and (O/N: 105/6) 149 all out in 48.2 overs (Pratika Rawal 63, Sneh Rana 30; Lucy Hamilton 3-32, Annabel Sutherland 2-15, Alana King 2-23, Ashleigh Gardner 2-8) lt to Australia: 323 and 28/0 in 4.3 overs.
Result: Aus won by 10 wkts. **PoM & PoS:** Annabel Sutherland.

Aditi ends T-3 at Blue Bay LPGA

HAINAN ISLAND (CHINA), PTI: Aditi Ashok dropped three bogeys in a row in the middle of the round but still managed to hold on for an even par 72 that helped her finish tied-third in the Blue Bay LPGA here.

Aditi birdied the third but gave away shots on the seventh, eighth and the ninth before picking up strokes on the 15th and the 18th.

The Indian golfer's 72 saw her reach 8-under for four rounds and she finished three shots behind the winner, Mi Hyang Lee (73) of Korea.

This was Aditi's best finish since her T2 at the JM Eagle LA Championship in 2023.

Diksha finishes T-5

Diksha Dagar logged her first top-5 finish of the season, finishing a creditable tied-fifth in the Australian Women's Classic after carding a 1-under 71 despite two bogeys in the middle of the round in Magenta Shores.

Pranavi Urs, who had also been looking set for a Top-5 finish slipped in the final round as she shot 6-over 78, and finished sole 14th.

Shubhankar lies 54th

India's Shubhankar Sharma carded 1-under 69 in the third round and was placed tied 54th after just about squeezing through to make the cut at the Joburg Open.

Russell reigns supreme in frantic Australian GP

MELBOURNE, AFP: George Russell kept his cool to win a frantic season-opening Australian Grand Prix on Sunday from Mercedes team-mate Kimi Antonelli after a thrilling battle with Ferrari's Charles Leclerc.

The pole-sitting Briton took the chequered flag by 2.974secs in Melbourne with Leclerc third and Lewis Hamilton fourth in a race that tested Formula One's new-look cars for the first time in competitive conditions.

Mercedes' George Russell celebrates with the trophy after winning the Australian GP on Sunday. REUTERS

World champion Lando Norris came fifth -- 51 seconds adrift -- in his McLaren with Red Bull's Max Verstappen a sensational sixth after starting from 20th following a crash in qualifying.

But there was disaster for home hero Oscar Piastri, who crashed on his out-lap to the grid and failed to start with major damage to his McLaren.

With the virtual safety car repeatedly brought out, pre-season favourite Russell stayed calm to clock a sixth Grand Prix win and his first since Singapore last year.

"Feeling incredible. It was a hell of a fight in the beginning," said Russell. "We knew it was going to be challenging.

"I made a bad start and some really tight battles with Charles at the start. Just really glad to cross the finish line."

Under new rules, half of every power unit now is a battery and drivers had to recharge while braking or by lifting off the throttle to avoid it draining.

The challenge of Melbourne's 58-lap Albert Park circuit was its long sweeping straights, which deplete batteries, and relatively few twisty turns to brake and charge it up again.

Five cars failed to finish as they grappled with the changes, including Piastri, Audi's Nico Hulkenberg, Red Bull's Isack Hadjar, Cadillac's Valtteri Bottas and Aston Martin's Fernando Alonso.

Haas' Ollie Bearman was seventh and rookie Arvid Lindblad eighth in his Racing Bull.

Alcaraz cruises; Djokovic fights through

INDIAN WELLS, AFP: World No. 1 Carlos Alcaraz swept past Grigor Dimitrov 6-2, 6-4 to reach the third round of the Indian Wells ATP Masters on Saturday as Novak Djokovic battled back for a three-set victory over Kamil Majchrzak.

Spain's Alcaraz was untroubled by the former world No. 3 from Bulgaria, pushing his perfect 2026 match record to 13-0 in just 66 minutes.

Djokovic, a five-time Indian Wells champion who has struggled in recent years, had to grind for two hours and 12 minutes to subdue 57th ranked Kamil Majchrzak of Poland 4-6, 6-1, 6-2.

Alcaraz said he was wary of Dimitrov, but even in the swirling winds on Stadium Court he was in control, firing from the baseline with power and accuracy.

He barely broke a sweat and cracked plenty of smiles, saving the lone break point he faced in the second set and even getting a high-five from his opponent on a changeover.

He added the Qatar Open title before heading Stateside to chase a third Indian Wells crown.

Rybakina triumphs

Australian Open champion Elena Rybakina fended off a determined challenge from 43rd-ranked American Hailey Baptiste to reach the third round of the Indian Wells ATP and WTA Masters 1000.

The third-seeded Kazakh, who won the Indian Wells title in 2023, needed all of her patience and resolve in the face of an aggressive attack from Baptiste, but steadied herself in the final set to win 7-6 (7/5), 2-6, 6-2.

Novak Djokovic

Hosts India post big victory vs Uruguay in WC Qualifiers opener

HYDERABAD, PTI: The Indian women's hockey team opened its FIH World Cup Qualifiers campaign with a dominant 4-0 win over Uruguay here on Sunday.

Sunelita Toppo (21st minute), Ishika (40th), Lalremsiami **(in pic)** (49th) and Rutuja Dadaso Pisal (58th) scored for the home side.

It was a bright start to the match in the first quarter as India made multiple circle entries and several goal-scoring chances. In the 4th minute, the home side won the first penalty corner of the night as Udita found the net after a beautifully orchestrated variation but her shot went a bit high and hence the goal wasn't given.

Uruguay too had their moments as they banked on counterattacking hockey but India's resilient backline held their ground.

In the 21st minute, India broke the deadlock through a penalty corner as Sunelita Toppo (21') showed great reflexes to pounce on the rebound and tap the ball into the net to open the scoring.

Five minutes later, India received another penalty corner but this time, Annu's drag flick was stopped by the Uruguayan defence. India held most of the possession in the second quarter.

Marmoush takes City into quarters

LONDON, AFP

Manchester City shrugged off 10 changes to their starting line-up to beat Newcastle 3-1 and reach the FA Cup quarterfinals on Saturday as Chelsea battled past 10-man Wrexham.

Earlier, Premier League leaders Arsenal stayed on track for a historic quadruple by seeing off a feisty challenge from third-tier Mansfield, to win their fifth-round tie 2-1.

City coach Pep Guardiola, juggling punishing Premier League and Champions League commitments, changed nearly the entire side from the 2-2 draw with Nottingham Forest in midweek, with only Matheus Nunes keeping his place.

Omar Marmoush

Chelsea scare

Chelsea are also into the last eight after a 4-2 win but only after a scare against second-tier Wrexham, who twice took the lead.

Yamal special in Barca win

Teenage star Lamine Yamal's superbly taken goal earned Barcelona a 1-0 win at Athletic Bilbao on Saturday in La Liga.

The champions restored their four-point lead on second-placed Real Madrid, who had temporarily closed the gap by beating Celta Vigo on Friday.

Yamal curled into the top corner after 68 minutes to split the sides at Athletic's San Mames stadium.

Villarreal beat Elche 2-1 on Sunday to keep pace with third-placed Atletico in the battle for third in La Liga. Both sides are now level on points.

Results: Athletic Club: 0 lt to Barcelona: 1 (Yamal 68th); Atletico: 3 (Sorloth 5th, Gonzalez 67th, 81st) bt Real Sociedad: 2 (Soler 9th, Oyarzabal 68th); Villarreal 2 (Buchanan 31st, Mourino 41st) bt Elche: 1 (Silva 83rd).

Southampton in QF

Championship side Southampton reached the FA Cup quarterfinals with a shock 1-0 win against Fulham on Sunday.

Results: Wrexham: 2 (Smith 18th, Doyle 78th) lt to Chelsea: 4 (Okonkwo 40th OG, Acheampong 82nd, Garnacho 96th, Joao Pedro 120th+5); Newcastle: 1 (Barnes 18th) lt to Man City: 3 (Savinho 39th, Marmoush 47th, 65th); Fulham: 0 lt to Southampton: 1 (Stewart 90th P).

THE ROAR RETURNS:
India crowned T20 kings

Indian players celebrate after beating New Zealand by 96 runs in the T20 World Cup final at the Narendra Modi Stadium in Ahmedabad on Sunday. PTI

Surya and Co exorcise 2023 ghosts as hosts crush Kiwis by 96 runs in the final

SIDNEY KIRAN
AHMEDABAD, DHNS

Great expectations turned into unbridled ecstasy as the Indian team created history by lifting the ICC T20 World Cup for a record third time, the defending champions producing the perfect performance they'd been seeking all tournament in the grand finale on the grandest stage here on Sunday.

Sanju Samson, in the form of his life since his return to the playing XI, smashed another brilliant 89 off 46 balls, his under-fire opening partner Abhishek Sharma cracked a fortunate 52 off 21 balls while one-drop Ishan Kishan hammered a superb 54 off 25 balls as India rode the top-three blitzkriegs and late assault from Shivam Dube (26 n.o., 8b) to post an imposing 255/5 in front of a packed house at the Narendra Modi Stadium.

Underdogs New Zealand, who made a lot of tactical mistakes while bowling with skipper Mitchell Santner at fault for all of those, needed a Herculean effort if they were to scale the highest total in a T20 World Cup final. Yes, the pitch was flat just like it was in their exceptional semifinal chase against South Africa last Wednesday in Kolkata but this Indian team are masters at handling high-pressure games unlike the Proteas. And the Kiwis, the eternal bridesmaids in ICC limited-overs events, felt the full force of it as Jasprit Bumrah (4/15) and Co delivered a masterclass to dismiss them for 159, India romping to a massive 96-run victory.

India, who won the ICC Champions Trophy and the Asia Cup last year, were cautious to begin with, and understandably so. It was the final where an early mistake could prove costly. But the moment Abhishek smashed Jacob Duffy for back-to-back boundaries in the third over followed by a Samson four off the last ball, India never looked back as they sped along like a bullet train, rummaging through everything in their path.

World No. 1 batter Abhishek, whose form had been atrocious this World Cup with three ducks and just one fifty, had the much-needed luck coming his way. The edges either fell in no-man's land or flew to boundaries as everything that had to go wrong for New Zealand went wrong. But Santner was to blame as he opted to give off-spinner Glenn Phillips just one over early on despite that variety of bowling being Abhishek's weakness.

The southpaw didn't complain as he accepted the gift with both hands to brutalise the Kiwis.

At the other end, Samson, who has been seeing cricket ball like a football, continued to bat with gay abandon. Straight shots down the grounds, flicks over mid-wicket, pulls and drives, the right-hander reprised the breathless batting that the cricketing world witnessed the last two times. With both Samson and Abhishek going berserk, runs were coming at the rate of knots, India reaching 92/0 in the Power Play. At the way they were going, even thoughts of 300 didn't look outlandish.

Against the run of play, Abhishek departed in the eighth over but he'd done his job, stitching a 98-run stand off 43 balls. The incoming Kishan ensured the momentum never dipped, the southpaw playing the big shots right from the get-go. Samson too maintained the high tempo, a dumbstruck New Zealand looking bereft of ideas as literally no bowler was spared by the merciless Indians on a belter of a surface.

New Zealand, against the tide, somehow managed to pull things back when Jimmy Neesham (3/46) dismissed Samson, Kishan and Suryakumar in the 16th over. It looked India's high-speed run would be brought to a screeching halt but Dube clobbered 24 runs in the final over to power India past 250 for a third straight time that ensured they had one hand on the trophy. The bowlers then ensured both hands were laid emphatically to complete a memorable night for this supremely dominant Indian side.

Sanju Samson

Abhishek Sharma

Fans celebrate India's T20 WC victory nationwide. PTI

SCOREBOARD

INDIA

Samson c sub b Neesham (46b, 5x4, 8x6)	89
Abhishek c Seifert b Ravindra (21b, 6x4, 3x6)	52
Kishan c Chapman b Neesham (25b, 4x4, 4x6)	54
Pandya c Santner b Henry (13b, 1x4, 1x6)	18
Surya c Ravindra b Neesham (1b)	0
Varma (not out) (6b)	8
Dube (not out) (8b, 3x4, 2x6)	26
Extras (W-8)	8
TOTAL (for 5 wkts, 20 overs)	**255**

Fall of wickets: 1-98 (Abhishek), 2-203 (Samson), 3-204 (Kishan), 4-204 (Suryakumar), 5-226 (Pandya).
Bowling: Henry 4-0-49-1 (w-4), Phillips 1-0-5-0, Duffy 3-0-42-0 (w-1), Ferguson 2-0-48-0 (w-3), Santner 4-0-33-0, Ravindra 2-0-32-1, Neesham 4-0-46-3.

NEW ZEALAND

Seifert c Kishan b C'varthy (26b, 2x4, 5x6)	52
Allen c Varma b Axar (7b, 1x4)	9
Ravindra c Kishan b Bumrah (2b)	1
Phillips b Axar (5b, 1x4)	5
Chapman b Pandya (8b)	3
Mitchell c Kishan b Axar (11b, 2x6)	17
Santner b Bumrah (35b, 3x4, 2x6)	43
Neesham b Bumrah (7b, 1x4)	8
Henry b Bumrah (1b)	0
Ferguson (not out) (7b)	6
Duffy c Varma b Abhishek (5b)	3
Extras (B-4, LB-1, W-7)	12
TOTAL (all out, 19 overs)	**159**

Fall of wickets: 1-31 (Allen), 2-32 (Ravindra), 3-47 (Phillips), 4-70 (Chapman), 5-72 (Seifert), 6-124 (Mitchell), 7-141 (Neesham), 8-141 (Henry), 9-152 (Santner).
Bowling: Arshdeep 4-0-32-0 (w-5), Pandya 4-0-36-1 (w-1), Axar 3-0-27-3, Bumrah 4-0-15-4 (w-1), Chakravarthy 3-0-39-1, Abhishek 1-0-5-1.

Result: India won 96 runs.
PoM: Jasprit Bumrah.
PoS: Sanju Samson.

Key Players

JASPRIT BUMRAH
This once-in-a-generation fast bowler is a national treasure -- a safe deposit that can be encashed during a crisis. He was the difference between India winning and England losing in the semifinal with his parsimonious, probing death bowling.
M: 8; **W:** 14; **BBI:** 4/15; **Econ:** 6.21; **SR:** 12.00

SANJU SAMSON
What a story of resurrection and redemption for Samson. Back in the playing XI for the Super Eights' game owing to a tactical change, Samson took the World Cup by storm with two blazing knocks that earned him Player of the Match performances. He was key to India's power-packed starts in the business end.
M: 5; **R:** 321; **HS:** 97*; **Avg:** 80.25; **SR:** 199.37

AXAR PATEL
No one is indispensable, yes, but some are invaluable. That's Axar Patel to this India team. His absence was felt when India benched him for two games but since his return, the all-rounder delivered in the clutch moments to power India -- with the ball and fielding.
M: 7; **W:** 11; **BBI:** 3/27; **Econ:** 8.20; **SR:** 13.63; **R:** 16; **HS:** 14; **SR:** 106.66

SURYAKUMAR YADAV
A team without a good captain is like a company without a strong CEO. Irrespective of the abundant talent, the team needs someone to provide direction and Suryakumar has done that without being in-your-face. Personally, he did his job, playing according to the situation with some vital knocks.
M: 9; **R:** 242; **HS:** 84*; **Avg:** 30.25; **SR:** 136.72

HARDIK PANDYA: Since the last T20 World Cup, he's been one of the key players with his all-round skills. In short, he's been the MVP. Despite battling injuries, Pandya somehow picks himself up and keeps delivering. He played a few impactful knocks with the bat, dished out key spells and was electrifying in the field.
M: 9; **R:** 217; **HS:** 52; **Avg:** 27.12; **SR:** 160.74; **W:** 9; **BBI:** 2/16; **Econ:** 8.81; SR: 22.00

"Feels like a dream. Very happy and grateful. Out of words, out of emotions. To be honest, it started one-two years ago. When I was in the 2024 World Cup team where I didn't play, I kept visualising, kept on working and this was exactly what I wanted to do.
SANJU SAMSON

Feels extremely special because I've played one final at my home but couldn't win, but today I won. I knew the wicket was a flat one so I had to use all my experience.
JASPRIT BUMRAH

The one thing was very clear, I wanted to share it before as well, but today is the best day. The captain and coach had faith in me. Even I was doubting myself. I had never experienced this before, it was a tough tournament.
ABHISHEK SHARMA

Joyshree, Ambekar and Sahil punch impressive victories

BANGKOK, PTI: The Indian youth boxing team made a strong start to its campaign at the World Boxing Futures Cup here on Sunday, with Joyshree Devi Chirom **(in pic)**, Ambekar Meetei Lairenlakpam and Sahil Duhan registering victories.

In the women's 54kg category, Joyshree secured a Referee Stopped Contest (RSC) victory in the second round against her opponent from Tajikistan.

In the men's division, Ambekar (50kg) and Duhan (60kg) also began their campaigns on a winning note, both recording 5-0 unanimous decision victories over opponents from the Philippines and China respectively.

The Indian team is competing in the Youth Olympic weight categories, making the tournament an important step in the pathway towards the qualification and preparation for the big event.

The World Boxing Futures Cup, being held from March 8 to 15, brings together some of the most promising youth boxers from across the world and serves as a key developmental event in the global boxing calendar.

Indian youth boxers had delivered a historic performance last year at the 3rd Asian Youth Games in Bahrain, clinching seven medals including four gold, two silver and one bronze marking India's best-ever showing in youth boxing at the continental stage.

The Indian contingent will look to build on the positive start as the preliminary rounds continue in Bangkok.

South Western Railways win Mathru Cup

BENGALURU, DHNS

South Western Railways were crowned the Mathru Cup state-level basketball championship for women for SMN Memorial Trophy as they defeated Beagles BC 63-37 in the final here on Sunday.

Bhandhavya (16 points) and Sathya (13) stood as the star performers for the champions while Sanjana saw her 17-point haul lay to waste for Begales at the Sree Kanteerava Stadium basketball courts.

Earlier, DYES Mysore defeated Mounts Club 60-40 in the third-place match with Mandhara (15) and Rakshitha (12) providing crucial points. Nidhi Umesh stood out with 13 points for the losing side.

DYES' Mandhara was also named the Most Promising Player of the Tournament while Beagles' Swathi was awarded the Player of the Tournament. SWR were awarded a cash prize of Rs 1 lakh while runners-up Beagles were awarded Rs 70,000.

Winners of Mathru Cup, South Western Railways pose with the SMN Memorial Trophy at Sree Kanteerava Stadium basketball courts in Bengaluru on Sunday. From left: Sathya K, Anusha IP, Surya Darshini, Zarin Somaiah (coach), Bhandavya HM, Sobhana, Sruthi Arvind.
DH PHOTO/PUSHKAR V

Results: SWR: 63 (Bhandhavya 16 points, Sathya 13) bt Beagles BC: 37 (Sanjana 17, Chandana 10). HT: 44-27.

Awards: Best Player of the Tournament: Swathi (Beagles). **Most Promising Player:** Mandhara (DYES Mysore).

Karnataka's Saqlain grabs discus throw bronze

BENGALURU, DHNS: Karnataka's Mohammed Saqlain claimed a bronze medal in the men's discus throw final of the National Open Throws competition in Patiala on Sunday.

The 26-year-old athlete managed a distance of 55.47m in a close battle for the second position with Army's Dharamraj Yadav (55.75). ONGC's Kirpal Singh was head and shoulders above at 58.89.

Meanwhile, Army's Shivam Lokhare won the men's javelin final with a best attempt of 81.08m while competing with Asian Games silver medallist Kishore Jena, who finished third at 74.75.

Results: Men: Javelin throw: Shivam Lohakare (Arm) 81.08m, 1; Anand Singh (SSCB) 76.94, 2; Kishore Jena (Odi) 74.75. Discus throw: Kirpal Singh (ONGC) 58.89, 1; Dharamraj Yadav (Arm) 55.75, 2; Mohammed Saqlain (Kar) 55.47.

Mohammed Saqlain

U-20: Ashish Yadav (Arm) 74.79, 1; Rishabh Giri (Rel) 72.51, 2; Dharanidharan (TN) 71.31, 3. **Discus throw:** Ujjawal Choudhary (JSW) 60.03, 1; Vaibhav V (HP) 55.44, 2; Sahil Kadian (Har) 54.94
U-18: Javelin throw: Vishal Patel (NCP) 70.62, 1; Rajat Kumar (UP) 70.52, 2; Ayush Raj (Bih) 69.53, 3.
Discus throw: Nishchay (Har) 63.90, 1; Yash Jaglan (Har) 56.50, 2; Virendra Poonia (Raj) 55.46
Women: U-20: Javelin throw: Poonam (JSW) 49.50, 1; Bhavya Pilania (JSW) 46.77, 2; Shivani I (UP) 40.45, 3.
U-18: Javelin throw: Tanushri Mahalder (WB) 48.74, 1; Misti Karmakar (WB) 45.54, 2; Arya Mohita (Mah) 41.56.

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